

*The Biographical Novel of*  
WILLIAM WYNNE WISTER

# The Glass Crutch

*by* JIM BISHOP

THE TRUE STORY OF A MAN WHO CONQUERED  
ALCOHOLISM AND FOUND THE KEYS TO ITS CURE

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IT IS ESTIMATED that there are almost three million alcoholics in the United States—men and women. And this number is increasing alarmingly every year. THE GLASS CRUTCH is the story of one of them, William Wynne Wister, and how he became an alcoholic, how he tried to cure himself and failed, how he was finally cured by a great psychotherapist, and how, after his own cure, he devoted himself to the cure of others.

The story of Wister's life is presented as fiction to avoid the limitations of the biographical form, but the story of that remarkable man is but thinly veiled. We see him first as a young boy whose craving for popularity led him astray. After the last war he became engaged, but his fiancée couldn't stand his drinking habits, so he drifted West, drinking more and more.

Marriage and the birth of two small boys offered no solution, nor did his frequent visits to sanitariums. It was only when he went to the famous Dr. Peabody in New York that a cure was effected and he was able to turn to helping others along the hard and desperate path to cure.

This book will add an important chapter to the methods of treating alcoholism. Beyond that, it is an engrossing novel packed with emotional punch.

IT IS ESTIMATED that there are almost three million alcoholics in the United States—men and women—and this number is increasing alarmingly every year. There is hardly an individual who doesn't know an alcoholic or know of one. Most of these men and women, dominated by alcohol, are completely baffled, groping in the dark, hoping for a miracle to happen which will release them from their bondage. Most of the families, too, of these groping men and women are baffled and disheartened, hoping—and waiting—for the same miracle. Unfortunately waiting is not the cure.

Much has been done and much is being done for alcoholism by leading psychiatrists and psychotherapists in the country. But in spite of this good work almost everyone—particularly those most concerned: the alcoholic and his family—is completely unaware of what makes an alcoholic and, therefore, of what cures him. Because of this sad truth, while great efforts are being made to cure alcoholics, hundreds of potential alcoholics are springing up unnoticed all around us—unnoticed particularly by those who would have the power to check them. It is no exaggeration to state that for every alcoholic cured there are two hundred potential alcoholics in the making. Therefore the way to stamp out alcoholism is to cure the alcoholic *and* prevent new ones from cropping up. We wiped out Germany's Wehrmacht not just by fighting down every German plane in the sky. We did that, yes, but we also bombed every German factory where new German planes were being built. It was this double attack that destroyed the gigantic menace. The same holds true for alcoholism.

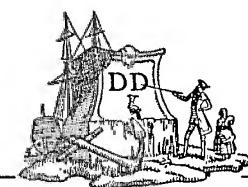
Not until every single adult, man or woman, is made thoroughly aware of the ingredients that go into the making of an alcoholic, and then uses his knowledge to prevent individuals from developing into the personalities that make alcoholics; not until every adult becomes more aware of the disease itself than of the symptom—not until then can the rising tide of alcoholism be stemmed. It is interesting to note that the same factors that prevent alcoholism in the first place are the very factors that must be considered in the cure of alcoholism.

It is hoped that a close study of **THE GLASS CRUTCH**, which is the story of the making and curing of an alcoholic, together with the extremely helpful advice of psychotherapist William Wynne Wister, the man whose experience the book relates, will guide alcoholics and their families to a return to normal life and living, and guide the public in general to a solution of one of the greatest problems of our time—the prevention and cure of alcoholism.

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# The Glass Crutch

THE BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL OF  
WILLIAM WYNNE WISTER BY  
**JIM BISHOP**



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GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK 1945

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To the little girls  
who remained quiet  
while the work was done: *Virginia Lee and Gayle Peggy*

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FIRST EDITION

## *For the Record*

IN WRITING this book I have tried earnestly to keep myself and my opinions out of it, because I feel that the life of William Wynne Wister, as he lived it, is vital to our understanding of three million chronic alcoholics and it should not be encumbered with gratuities from the author. And so I wrote it almost reportorially, being careful to keep Bill himself in focus at all times, even to the point of pressing his parents, his two wives, and his two sons into the shadowy background.

Bill Wister is one of the few men in this country who have been long-term victims of alcoholism and lived, not only to be cured, but to cure others and to dig deeply into the psychological causes of drinking. Of that small group, he is the only one I know who has had the moral courage to permit the story of his life to be put on paper for the ultimate profit of others.

He is, at this writing, forty-four, medium tall, has thinning reddish hair, a charming smile, a handsome face, and the most elaborate hand gestures in New York. To describe a patient who is doing well and is learning to enjoy things unknown to the chronic alcoholic, Wister places the flat of his right hand close to his chest and then makes it describe ever-widening circles as the hand moves upward. To describe the drinker who has just finished a binge, the left hand is held high and moves laterally, then describes a sudden dip downward. His voice is pleasant. He is quick to smile, is an intense audience for anyone who wants to talk, and his laughter is deep in his throat. He loves to get up from his chair and imitate people. His dress is always impeccable and his manners correct.

In the scores of times Bill Wister and I have pondered the

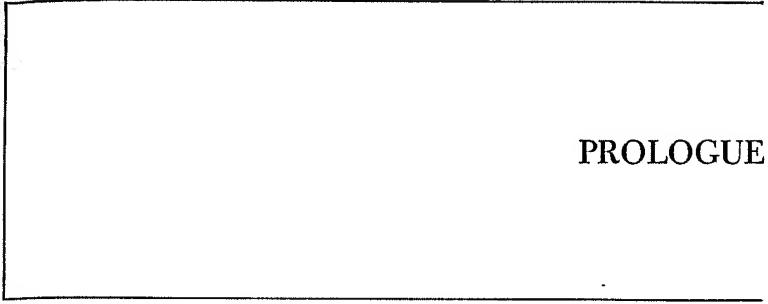
scenes of his life I have become convinced not only that psychotherapy represents a cure for alcoholism but, latterly, that it is the *only* cure. I believe that the groups now engaged in work on alcoholism are uniformly fine groups, because each, no matter what its method, is trying to help the alcoholic to regain his health and his happiness.

However, I subscribe to psychotherapy as the best cure—and the word “cure” means a permanent disinclination to alcohol and not an acquired ability to drink normally—because it is the only therapy I know which takes the glass crutch from the victim without substituting another.

JIM BISHOP

## Contents

<i>Prologue</i>	I
BOOK ONE <i>The Making of an Alcoholic</i>	10
BOOK TWO <i>The Alcoholic</i>	91
BOOK THREE <i>The Cure of the Alcoholic</i>	212
BOOK FOUR <i>Disillusionment</i>	254
<i>An Epilogue</i>	294



## PROLOGUE

1945

IT WAS NOSTALGIA. Maudlin nostalgia. He wanted to see what Greene Street was like and whether it had changed and who lived in the house now and what kind of people they were and whether that big tree was still in back where the Howell boys nearly broke their necks swinging on a rope from a branch and whether the herringboned red bricks still served as a sidewalk and if the big-linked chain across the driveway had survived all the scrap-metal drives and whether the big broad elm was still next door in Aunt Emily's back yard. A long time ago she had sent her gardener up into that elm to saw a branch off. The man sat on the outside while sawing and when he hit the ground he was deader than a Norwegian elk.

Bill drove down from New York alone. Kay was busy and he wouldn't have asked her along anyway. Nostalgia is a hunger pain. It can't be shared. So he drove down and over the Roosevelt Boulevard and turned right at Germantown Avenue. All the little shops seemed to be the same and the trolleys were the same. Beyond the railroad station he turned left and went over onto Greene Street and on up to the slight rise between Ashmead and Queen and pulled up the brake and got out.

It was noon and warm for September. Some boys in sweat shirts were in Aunt Emily's back yard. The oldest was about fifteen. He had a football under his arm. All smoked cigarettes.

Nearer to the curb was a mangy victory garden. A white matchbox milk truck rolled down Greene Street and swung left on Ashmead toward Wister Street. In another day Bill might have wondered if the driver knew that the street had been named for his family. Or if he had ever bounced his truck over on Belfield Avenue and seen Wister's Woods Park or if he had ever seen the dirty white stone building on Germantown Avenue with its brass knocker and giant keys and the little sign over it that whispers:

**OLD WISTER HOUSE**

BUILT IN 1744

*The British Gen. James Agnew  
Died Here after the Battle*

Oh yes. In another day he might have wondered if the driver realized how important the Wisters are. But not now. The metamorphosis had come and gone a decade ago and now he no longer wondered about such things. He wore the neuter expression of a cleric on vacation and he was careful crossing streets and he rose when his wife entered the room—sometimes—and he didn't like to walk in grass because it dimmed the luster of his shoes and he changed the subject when people disagreed with him. Not that William Wynne Wister was a Mickey Mouse. It was just that he had reshuffled the deck of life and had placed new values on the cards.

Greene Street looked like an ex-actress caught in a corridor with a mop and a pail. All the shining grandeur was gone. The buildings looked dirty and slightly puffy under the windows. The brick sidewalk had buckled in some places and sunk in others. The street itself was still convex, but not so severely as in 1907, when Uncle Bill, fat and opulent, had come racing down it in his brand-new chain-drive Fiat with smoke pouring thick and black out behind.

The big metal flower urn on the lawn was peeling paint and growing spindly weeds. The triple fireplace chimney was still intact and someone had painted one half the building. The other

half was empty. Those houses, with two families sharing sides, are as characteristic of Philadelphia as scrapple.

Coming down from Queen Street, the Howell house was first. Then Charles Wister's. Then the two great back yards of Emily Wister's and Hannah Wister's homes, and from there the view was clear all the way down to Mannheim Street at the bottom of the hill. Later a little street had been cut between, and the small houses on it leaned their backs together against the old buildings of the past.

On the opposite side of Queen Street was the cutting edge of Hansberry Street, where almost all the houses were of yellow brick and almost all were alike and years ago people used to make jokes about what would happen if you lived there and the old man came home drunk. The people on Hansberry were less well off than the Wisters and that meant that their children were members of the court of young Prince William because he owned the only football and the only decent bicycle and the best bat and ball and glove.

Now he stood inside the gate of the old house with his hat back off his forehead and his hands on his hips, nodding his head and smiling his incredulity at what time had done to a child's world. He watched the boys douse their butts and toss the football around and he liked the way one of the small boys slung it, underhand and spinning evenly. The Howell summerhouse was still out there, far in the back, but the greenhouse that once burgeoned with blooms on the left had been replaced by a factory.

He walked up to Queen Street and turned right and on up to Germantown Avenue and there was the old Wister House and next to it was a saloon with a polished tan face called Dennis Café. He turned right again and walked down to see Aunt Emily's and Aunt Hannah's homes. He tried to figure how long his grandfather's sisters had been dead, but he hadn't made much of an estimate when he saw that the houses were down. There were two sagging iron gates and some gray stones in the ground and Philadelphia was about ready to grow on top of the old maids.

He went back around to the car and drove up Greene past

Queen and past the filling station that Grandpa Wister had represented to the gray stone dignity that had been his home. Grandpa had been the lord of the manor in those days. And he had worn the mantle graciously. The place still looked the same, the mica gray stones frosting the front. Now there was a sign in the front window. PHYSICAL THERAPY, it said. And next door was Grandpa Morgan's home and there was now a sign in his window too: FLOWERS.

It was twelve thirty-five. Time for a leisurely drive out to lunch with the folks. Time, too, to think. Time to think of how completely he had ruined his life, so that, in 1934, when he sobered up and took a long look at it, it had looked like Aunt Emily's house today—not a stone on a stone. But he wasn't afraid to look back now. He had rebuilt it and it was stronger and finer and more attractive than the original one and all the nervousness and hand-wringing and the feeling that everyone was looking at him had gone.

What he liked best about thinking back on this miserable life was that it no longer depressed him and he could examine and probe to his heart's content. Now he knew why he just had to be fire chief when the kids organized their little fire department. Now he knew why he so bravely jumped off the stable roof into the horse-dung pit. Now he knew why he had shouted and raved and screamed at his own family when the judge said: "I order you committed to the Norristown State Hospital for a period of not less than one year."

He knew the whys of lots of things now. He knew the key that unlocks the whys. And, as he drove toward Mother's, he knew that if there was anything of importance that he could leave to men who must drink it was duplicates of that key. Not preaching. Not the pious clasping of hands and the raising of eyes heavenward. Not the slow damning shake of the head nor the clucking of a reprobating tongue nor the tears that make the miserable more miserable. None of these. Just the mathematics of *why*.

Usually lunch at Mother's is lunch at Mother's and you eat food and she and Father smile and peck industriously with their forks and exchange the latest gossip about kin and friends and Mother talks about her dress shop and Father shuffles over to the window box to fill his pipe and Mother tinkles the little brass bell near her hand and the maid comes in, holding a tureen along her right arm, and stoops so that Father can help himself from it.

It's lunch at Mother's. It has always been like that.

But this time, because he was going to have his biography done, it was different. He examined his parents and was amazed to discover how different they looked. Mother was what a woman over seventy should look like but seldom does: gray hair, feather-bobbed, the charm of a professional hostess, slender, well gowned, a dash of dignity, and a veiled sparkle around the eyes that said a good joke would be in order. Father didn't look his seventy-five. He looked like a retired banker, brown tweed suit, pince-nez, pink cheeks, paunch, pipe, close gray mustache, and the air of a man whose nerves were always under control and who would insist on going to the office every morning if someone didn't restrain him.

Bill wasn't surprised to find that his room had been maintained intact. The furniture was exactly the same and placed the way he liked it. Even though he has been married twice the room is kept spotless and ready.

In a corner of the dining room opposite the kitchen service door stands an old grandfather's clock. He had seen it before and yet he had never seen it. Now he looked at it and asked his father questions about it. The old man waved vaguely with his pipe at the great silver face on it and the date, 1834. It was built by Isaiah Lukens and Bill's great-grandfather in Philadelphia. It took eighteen months of patient labor to complete it, and since then it has ticked scores of Wisters from birth to eternity. The hours are marked off on it by twos up to twenty-four. Bill commented that millions of servicemen were now telling time that way and the old man smiled and said yes, fashions sometimes return. He said that the big silver pendulum contained sixteen

pounds of mercury and that, when he and Mother had moved up to Chestnut Hill, he had held the pendulum between his knees because if even the vaguest whisper of mercury was lost the clock would never be accurate again.

"How accurate is it?" Bill said.

"It loses about fifteen seconds a week," Mr. Wister said.

He sat and talked with his parents, recalling things and laughing a little over things that could now be laughed at, and all the time he was conscious of the pontifical tick of the clock. At three he left and drove outward until he came to the narrow, hilly streets of Norristown and saw the monotonous houses and the Negro dandies out for an afternoon stroll and the poor dark children who squatted barefoot on the curbside, watching glistening cars go by. He saw the white section too and there wasn't much difference except that the gardens were better kept and the children had shoes.

Then he went down across the big drive and around to where the great sore stands red on a green knuckle of a hill. There is a high old iron fence around it and inside there is a collection of brick buildings and mangy lawns and the schizophrenics who sit on park benches like weary dolls, unmoving and unblinking. The women visitors sit near their men with brown bags of fruit on their laps. The conversation is mostly one-sided because the schizos seldom talk and they will hold an orange in their hands exactly the way you place it. The worn martyrs come up to this place knowing all this; they make the pilgrimage in the same manner that other women visit graves.

Bill Wister walked around and watched. He saw a young man with a mountain of pleading in his eyes at an upstairs window. He was waving an envelope between the bars. "Pleeze, missuh? Pleeze? You mail this to Fairmount Park, pleeze? Oh, pleeze God, missuh? You mail this, pleeze, pleeze, pleeze?" Bill turned away. He knew that the young man had probably been waving that envelope for weeks at everyone who passed beneath his window.

Somewhere a piano thumped and men with good lungs and sick minds bellowed: "I will take you home again, Kathleen."

There were dead leaves underfoot on the smooth earthen paths worn by the feet of the insane. There are giant poplars free to grow and to stretch themselves to the sun and free to soak up water from the soil and free to lead a heedless, thoughtless existence until two men and a saw arrive.

There was a big farm where the tractable insane bent over the rows of potatoes and corn and beans. There was the sheriff—there is always a sheriff at Norristown. He was small and very busy and had a claw hand and wore a Boy Scout hat and a Spanish-American War tunic with one button and he carried old yellowed newspapers under his arm. No one ever found out what he planned to do with them. He had a bright little smile and, whether you spoke to him or not, he'd point with his claw and say, "He went that way," in the manner of a man with a harelip.

Van was still there. Van the gracious, the benign. Van of the hunting dogs and the private cabin. Van, who had murdered his mother forty years ago, And Fitz, who never spoke unless someone fed him his cue line. All you had to say was, "You're a great kidder, Fitz." And he'd point at you and cackle, "Kidder Peabody! That's it! Kidder Peabody! Couldn't think of it to save me! Kidder Peabody!" You could wait ten minutes and feed the cue line again.

The old cases are in Building 9. They are ancients and they sit rocking in the sun and, no matter how violent they were years ago, they are quiet now. They have the patience of men who know that they will be free soon and they make little ticking sounds with their rockers, like the grandfather's clock.

Then there is the building where the inmates are insane and have tuberculosis as well. And the flat cupcake of a building where the morgue is. And the interminable mounded tunnels through which men and women shuffle to their meals and from their meals and for examinations and from examinations and to effect transfers to "better" buildings or "worse" buildings and which shelter them from rain and snow and freedom.

In the evening he drove to downtown Philadelphia and had dinner alone on the roof of the Bellevue-Stratford. He smiled a little when he saw that the old bar downstairs was now a cigar shop. Many and many a time they had jammed a pint under his arm and begged him to please leave and go home and get some sleep.

Upstairs, the maître d'hôtel beamed. "Ah, Mr. Wis'. You still onna wagon, Mr. Wis'? Ha-ha. I wanna tell you is some somprise! You sure you no have a leetle drop on me, Mr. Wis'? Ha-ha. You som' fella. Ah, come on. Issa like old time. Ha? Okay. Is good you stay sober, Mr. Wis'. Ha-ha. You som' fella inna ol' days. Sucha trouble!" Then, somewhat sadly: "Is not like dat no more. Issa new crowd, yong kids, you know? Issa not like the ol' times, ha? Youza wot? I thought you say you gonna write a book. Ha-ha. Thassa be the day, hah, Mr. Wis'? Wait. I get you a waiter."

He drove home slowly. Kay was in bed reading an Ellery Queen and she smiled and said, "Have a good time?" Bill took off his hat and said yes, and the folks looked fine and not to forget to set the alarm a little early because he wanted time to lounge over his second cup of coffee.

1900

IT STARTED in an orderly way. The date was December twenty-ninth. The time was three in the morning. Charles Wister paced up and down the foyer of his home on Pulaski Avenue. Dr. Horton Welch had been upstairs for hours. He was young and icily efficient and he had no patience with worrisome fathers. Mrs. Wister was more to his liking. She asked for no sedatives and tried to have her babies with as little histrionics as possible.

A moment after three Julia came out of the sickroom, waddled down into the kitchen, got boiling water, waddled back upstairs, forgot towels, and came out again and downstairs and back upstairs. A little later she came out, as buxom and fearsome

as a statue of Goliath Germania, leaned over the balustrade, and said:

"'Tis a fine, healthy boy we're after havin', Mr. Wister. Nine pounds, glory be to God!"

Charles Wister's murmurous "Thank God!" was lost in Julia's echoes. He shuffled into the living room, turned the hand-crank phone, and asked for Germantown 2034. His father answered.

"I just wanted to tell you, Father, that we have a fine, healthy boy here. . . . Yes. . . . At three twenty-seven. . . . Yes, Father. A boy. . . . What? . . . Nine pounds exactly. . . . No. I don't know yet. I have to run upstairs now. . . . Yes, Father. Sometime in the morning. . . . Good night, Father. . . . What's that? . . . Oh, thank you, Father."

Charles Wister hung up and ran upstairs as fast as a young fellow of thirty-one can run. He met the doctor at the door and congratulated himself for having picked Welch out of eight that he had had in mind.

"How is she, Doctor?"

He didn't wait for an answer. He rushed inside and knelt beside the bed and tried to sympathize with his wife. She waved him away.

A few blocks away Grandpa Wister was squinting with sleep under a freshly lighted gas lamp. Before him was the giant family Bible. In his hand was a pen. He wrote:

"B. Dec. 29, 1900, at 3:27 A.M. William Wynne Wister."

Then he yawned, scratched himself vigorously, and padded off to bed.

*Book One*

THE MAKING OF AN ALCOHOLIC

1902

THE DAY was hot. Even for merciless July it was hot. Julia sat by the crib rocking silently and mumbling prayers and wishing that the brats in the street would keep quiet. Bill's mother tiptoed in.

"How is he?"

"Shhh!" The baby's mother was waved out. Then Elizabeth came in on the determined feet of a lady of six. She wanted to know if her baby brother felt better. She was shhh'd but wouldn't stay shhh'd. She wanted to know and she felt that she had a right to know and nobody was going to shhh *her*. In a moment one of Julia's special glares, usually reserved for infidels who tiptoe from church after mass and *before* benediction, had wilted Elizabeth and she slunk out of the room.

The fat doctor arrived. He was the third. He stepped down out of his buggy; his face was red and sweaty and he attached a strap to the horse's bridle and plopped the round fat weight onto the dust inside the curb. Then he got his black bag and started up the steps.

Mrs. Wister told him the history of the illness. Her son had contracted la grippe. He recovered. Now he had a strange, recurrent fever and he banged his head against the sides of the crib and he often slapped his little hands against the sides of his

head. Mrs. Wister was smilingly optimistic. It has been her life-long trademark.

The fat doctor wheezed upstairs, glanced coldly at Julia, stripped the baby, and examined him. Afterward he packed his instruments and took a small jar of black ointment from the bag.

"Your baby," he grunted, "has spinal meningitis. I want you to take this black ointment and rub it on his groin and under his arms four times a day."

He left. With him he took two dollars and the peace of mind of the family. Bill's father was worried.

"Bessie," he said, "we're going to lose that boy."

"Oh, hush!" she said, and went to the phone and called another doctor.

The next doctor was young.

"Is he inclined to throw his head back? . . . Mmmm. Does he—uh—throw his eyes back when he—uh—throws his head back? . . . Mmmmm. Well, we'll treat him for spinal meningitis. If his temperature doesn't go down by morning, please phone me."

His temperature didn't go down. In the morning Uncle Bill phoned.

"Is he better?" he roared. "Well, why waste time then? Get Morton Smith. By God, he'll tell you what the trouble is. And do something about it too."

Dr. Morton Smith was called. He was quiet and reassuring. He was tall and slim and wore a goatee. He examined the baby and paid no attention when the youngster whimpered. Then he straightened up from the crib.

"Mrs. Wister, your child has what we call a double mastoid. If he is operated on immediately he has one chance in ten of living. If he isn't, he hasn't any chance."

Mr. Wister wasn't sure. He didn't like the odds. Mrs. Wister stared dry-eyed at the doctor until, in his eyes and hands, she found the answer to her questions. Then she said: "I'll get him ready." Mr. Wister phoned Charlie Kilpatrick and ordered a coach and a team of horses.

When it arrived Julia carried the baby out in blankets and the children on the street paused in their play to watch. Then Mrs. Wister came out, impatient on the arm of her husband. The doctor asked them to follow his buggy and they drove quickly to Germantown Hospital.

The baby was taken upstairs to the operating theater. Julia and Mr. and Mrs. Wister sat downstairs in the waiting room. Dr. James Wister—Uncle Jim—arrived in time to administer the ether. Two hours later Morton Smith came downstairs with a wax head in his arms. It was the side of a head of a human being and obviously he was about to demonstrate something about what had happened to the baby.

Mr. Wister watched him walk down the steps and he could control his agony no longer. "Bessie," he moaned, "we're going to lose that boy!"

Mrs. Wister was not given to speeches. She made an exception. "Charlie, pull yourself together! Nothing of the kind! He's going to get well!"

The doctor stood before them. He was tired and he hauled his mouth into a smile and told them that the operation was over. It was a success. Their baby would live. He took the wax head and explained that he had spent thirty-five minutes on this ear and twenty-five on that one. He told them how the pressure of pus had built up behind both ears and that if it had been permitted to build up a little more it would have burst through thin tissue into the baby's brain and spine, and death would have come pretty quickly. They listened as he pointed and explained and then Uncle Jim came down and said that the baby was coming out of the ether and that the Wisters could go up for a moment. The baby was fumbling in his rocky world of ether; his head was bound like a swami's and he kept trying to pull himself upright in the crib. Then tears came to Mrs. Wister's eyes. She felt that she had earned this bit of lace.

Bedlam broke outside the door and Julia flounced in, shaking attendants from her. The baby took one look and mumbled: "Ju-ah! Ju-ah!" Ignoring the stares of doctors and nurses, she

cradled the baby against her bosom, laid him down, pulled his covers up, and watched him wiggle himself comfortable and go off to sleep.

The seeds of Bill Wister's alcoholism had been planted.

## 1906

IT WAS springy and sunshiny; a day when a man likes to pull an old hat down over the bridge of his nose and doze somewhere. But on Pulaski Avenue the faces at the front and side windows were all grim. There were Bill's father and mother, and fat Uncle Bill, and Aunt Agnes and the children, and the Wister cook. They were all indoors and they were going to stay indoors for a long time. Young Master William had contracted measles.

Julia couldn't understand their anger when she leaned over the balustrade and hollered down:

"Isn't anyone going to come upstairs and see our little prisoner?"

## 1906

HE WAS within two days of being six. For Christmas, his mother had given him a brown pup. It was one of the few gifts that remained intact beyond sundown of Christmas Day. It was a cold and snowless day and he toddled along the walk behind the hedges, slapping his red mittens together and calling to the little furry ball that ran ahead of him.

The big mangy collie squeezed noiselessly through the hedge. His mouth curled away from his teeth and he struck at the pup before the little boy could scream. Little Bill picked up the pup and the collie struck again. The teeth went through the mitten and through the tender skin and slid against bone. Bill screamed and the big dog ran. The pup whimpered and trembled.

Mrs. Wister came running. So did Julia. Someone phoned Mr. Wister in his insurance office in downtown Philadelphia. Someone else phoned Grandpa Wister. He said to take the boy

to Nugent's drugstore right away. Grandpa was waiting in front of the single pillar before the apex of the store when the crowd arrived with the tear-stained child.

Bill had almost forgotten the bite. He saw that everyone seemed concerned and frightened about what had happened to him. He had been accustomed to beaming smiles of adoration. This was different. He was scared and confused. When his mother assured him that everything was going to be all right he felt relieved.

The druggist stuck red-hot needles into the bite marks. Bill screamed. Then Grandpa took him up the street to Dr. Parson's. He was very professional and had a moonface, black hair plastered tight against the sides of his head, and tortoise-rimmed glasses. The bleeding had stopped. The police had chased the collie. It bit nine dogs before they shot it and it crept behind a hedge and died. They sent the body to Pennsylvania Hospital, where pathologists cut little squares from the animal's brain and smeared them on glass slides and stared through microscopes for the dreaded Negri bodies.

The next morning one of them phoned Mrs. Wister.

"That dog had rabies, Mrs. Wister," he said. "We must tell you that there is no Pasteur treatment here in Philadelphia. We'd advise you to take the boy to Bellevue Hospital in New York right away."

Mrs. Wister hung up and phoned her sister Agnes on lower Fifth Avenue in New York. Agnes was Uncle Bill's wife. She said she'd phone Bellevue and make arrangements. When Mrs. Wister arrived with Bill a doctor was waiting. He undressed the child and examined the healing holes in the hand and placed the boy on his back. He washed his tummy with something cold, then he disappeared and came back with the biggest needle in the world.

"This isn't going to hurt, son," he said. "Just hold still."

He placed his left hand on the stomach, spread the skin taut with his fingers, and jabbed the needle in hard and deep. The boy felt a spasm hit him and he could feel the tissue tear; then

came a pain beyond endurance and he screamed and threshed and saliva bubbled from his mouth. The doctor didn't know it, but he had hit a nerve. The boy never again believed anyone who said: "This isn't going to hurt."

After that arrangements were made for Bill to get his Pasteur needles at Uncle Bill's house. On the twenty-ninth they staged a little birthday party for him. He didn't want to get out of bed to attend it but his mother coaxed and wheedled and put a bathrobe around him and carried him downstairs, petulant and very sorry for himself. He was carried into a dark room where candles were lighted on a cake. The faces of his cousins and strange faces flickered saffron and they said, awestruck: "This is the boy who was bitten by the dog!" They sang "Happy Birthday to You" but he played the role of a child of tragedy by looking sad.

No one remembers what became of the pup.

## 1907

GREENE STREET is only a few blocks from Pulaski, but for a boy of six it was a new world. The streets were new, the people were new, the houses were new, the children were new, and the unclimbed trees and fences were new. There was a lawn and a stone wall in front of the house. For a while he was careful to stay inside the wall.

There were Henny and Johnny Howell. Henny was seven; Johnny was five. They were the kids next door and their property ran away back toward Germantown Avenue. They had an octagon summerhouse in which to play and off to the left there was a barn with a manure pit.

The new boy had to impress the Howells. It was important that they realize, right at the start, that he was not just another boy, that he was, as Uncle Bill so often said, "the perfect boy." Whenever little Bill heard him say it he permitted his uncle the sunshine of a smile. However, young boys do not impress other young boys by smiling at them. What is needed is evidence of an elusive quality known as "gameness."

The Howells were satisfied to play simple games like hare and hounds and a childish form of football. Not Bill. When the Howells weren't looking he borrowed a bean pole from old man Barnes's back yard. Then he strolled over to the manure pit and jabbed it down into the mess as far as it would go. The pit was filled to within a few feet of the top with dung and dead rain water. There was a local legend that if anyone ever fell into it he'd never be seen again.

When the pole reached the bottom Bill pulled it up and stood the stick beside him. The top of the wet mark came to his shoulders. He put the bean pole back into old man Barnes's yard. Then he played for the rest of the afternoon.

The next morning he went to play with the Howells. He climbed up on the gutter drain. Then he edged along it slowly. The Howells stood below and told him that he sure was game all right. Then, when he had inched along the drain over the pit, they became frightened and begged Bill to watch his step. He felt good looking down at them. He was as confident as a circus performer.

Purposely the golden child leaned outward and teetered. The Howell kids gasped. Purposely he teetered out more and more until he lost his balance and plunged sneakers-first into the nauseating mess. The last thing he heard was the wild wail of his new friends.

Johnny ran for help, falling all over himself and babbling and pointing. Henny knelt at the edge of the pit and tried to help Bill out. After several failures he succeeded. Purposely Bill staggered when he stood on solid ground again. He moaned. He began to overplay the part. He felt fine and he had achieved what he had set out to do: win a lot of hysterical attention without hurting himself.

As the two boys came along the pathway that led to the house Johnny was dancing and jumping up and down with excitement and clutching the front of his trousers. Bill was covered from head to toe. Flies swarmed around him in excited admiration.

Then Julia came running. Then Mrs. Wister. Then Mrs. Howell. Then the Wisters' cook.

Henny kept yelling over and over: "He stinks! He stinks!" Conceded.

## 1907

IT WAS a cold winter day. Bill got out of bed and went downstairs and stood beside the hot stove, blinking and waking up. Annie MacRae, plump and busy, hurried with breakfast, putting things on the stove and going out on the porch to get other things from the icebox.

Bill saw the cat under the kitchen table. Then he looked at the stove. Then he watched Annie. It was a considerable time before she went out on the porch for something again. But when she did he reached under the table, picked the cat up by her front shoulders, carried her across the kitchen, and tossed her onto the middle of the hot stove. Some of the lids were red. The cat landed on her feet, emitted a violent howl, made the end of the stove in one bound, dove through the open porch window, and hid under the washtubs.

"Phwat was the cat howling about?" Annie asked. "Did you step on her foot?"

"Oh, she got scared and jumped through the window."

He was amused at the awkward way the cat had picked up her feet and tried to span the whole stove in one leap. Then he became frightened that perhaps Annie would find out and tell his mother. So he went out onto the porch and got some butter from the icebox. He saw the cat licking her paws and he put the butter on them.

## 1908

A WISTER always begins his formal education at Germantown Academy. This is as natural as finding a Lowell at a desk at Harvard, and just as unimportant.

Grandpa Wister was a trustee when Bill enrolled. Elizabeth was attending the Friends School on the opposite side of Greene Street. The boy did not want to attend school. The thought of school, with strange faces and an enforced behavior pattern, frightened him. He wanted to stay home and play. This time pleading did no good. He was dressed carefully, his blond curls were adjusted outside his coat collar, and he walked up the steps for the first time.

A boy with glasses walked up beside him. He studied Bill fully. Then he sneered: "Hello, Goldilocks." And Bill snapped: "Hello, you funny four-eyed frog!" The quick retort was blurted almost unconsciously.

Germantown Academy first opened in 1760. It was a tiny wooden shack with no pretensions. Today it is a group of gray stone buildings with an ivy tradition. The best-known thing about the place is its stone front step which, through the past hundred years or more, has been worn almost hollow by the little feet of scores of thousands of boys. This step is revered and no attempt is made to level it. Rather, as doors wear out over it, carpenters must cut new doors to fit the indentations.

Bill didn't like his first teacher. She had a wry neck and carried her chin on her left shoulder. She seemed to be looking at him all the time. He watched her nervously and suspiciously and was in constant dread that she would ask him a question. He was affable with the other children and always tried to get one of them to do his work.

Later that first day Grandpa Wister came up the walk. It was recess. Bill wasn't glad to see him. He didn't know what the old man might say. Mr. Wister smiled at the teacher and bumbled:

"Nice group of boys you have here."

"Yes, Mr. Wister," she said. "A very nice group of boys."

"And how is my grandson doing?" he asked, nodding at Goldilocks.

"Oh, very well, sir. Very well."

The eyes of all the children, like magnetized searchlights, swung to Bill.

He dropped his eyes and kicked lightly at the dirt and wished hard that his grandfather would go away.

## 1910

IT WAS a warm, buzzy morning in May. He had seen a two-wheel bicycle in a shop on Germantown Avenue. He just had to have it. It was colored deep blue and it had a bulb horn, a siren with chain attached to the front tire, a carbon lamp, a coaster brake, a rear mudguard stand, a flat tray behind the seat, and long handlebars with real motorcycle grips.

He just had to . . .

He walked up again and had another look at it. The price tag hung lifelessly from the handlebar. It read fifty dollars. He went back and sat on the side porch and thought for a long time. Then he went upstairs.

"Mother," he said sweetly, "do you think that around Christmas I might have another bicycle?"

She was smoothing a counterpane and didn't bother to look up.

"I don't know, dear. What's the matter with the one you have now?"

"Well, the rims are worn and the fenders are rattling and really, Mother, I've done the best I can to patch it and make it do."

There was no reply.

"Besides, Mother, you and Father did promise to give me a bicycle for Christmas."

"I know, dear," she said patiently, "but this isn't Christmas."

"Oh, it's only a few months away. Couldn't you give me the bike now and then you wouldn't have to give me one at Christmas?"

"Well . . . I don't know. I'll have to talk to your father about it."

"Oh," he said sadly. "You know how *Father* is."

She looked at him. He looked dejected and hung his head and

left the room. He maintained the attitude until he got out into the street. Then his mood changed to boastful optimism. He told his playmates that he was going to get the finest bike in the whole world and then he went into a private fantasy of riding the bike down Hansberry Street and dazzling all his friends with his fancy turns and hearing them beg for a ride. He could see the spokes twinkling like sequins in the sun and could see the bicycle speeding noiselessly into Marion Street and back up to Greene Street again. He must have it now.

Then he went back upstairs to Mother. She was rearranging bottles in a medicine chest.

"Mother," he said, "I've been to see the bicycle man on Germantown Avenue. And he has the most beautiful blue bicycle in the window. I asked him about it and he told me that he doubts that he can get another one like it. That seems to be the only one they've ever made."

Mrs. Wister sighed.

"I've never seen anyone like you, Bill. You'll just have to wait until your father gets home tonight and then I'll have a talk with him about it."

"Gee, Mother. It might be sold between now and tonight. What will I ever do? Mother, can't you let me go up and tell the man we'll take it?"

"No. You'll just have to wait."

He shuffled slowly out and downstairs and sat on the porch and brooded. Boys yelled to him to come on and play, but he said he didn't feel like playing. After a while his mother came downstairs and peered worriedly through the screen door.

"Bill, what are you doing out there?"

His voice was soft and sad. "Nothing. Just sitting around."

"Why don't you go out and play?"

"Oh, I don't know. Guess I don't feel much like it, Mother."

She disappeared. A half hour passed. Then she came down again.

"Now look here, Bill. I don't believe in this. But since it means so much to you, and if it is true that it might be sold, you'd better

go right up to that store and tell the man we'll take that bicycle."

It looked like a victory. But he wanted to insure it.

"Suppose," he said glumly, "that Father says no?"

"Now you do as I tell you. I'll take care of that."

He jumped up and kissed her quickly on the cheek.

"Oh, thank you, Mother. Thank you!"

He bounded off the porch, down the walk, out the gate, up Greene Street to Queen, up Queen to Germantown Avenue, and ran all the way to Coulter. In front of the shop he paused to study *his* bike and catch his breath. Then he went inside. The man was working on a tire.

"My mother says to tell you that we'll take that bicycle," he said, pointing. Then the boy opened a smaller campaign. He didn't particularly care for that lamp. And those—uh—handle-bars. The pitch was all wrong. And that puny tray on the back. Couldn't a bigger one be put on with a basket for baseball gloves and balls? Something nice and shiny?

Then he ran back home and acted worried and nervous and said: "The man says he'll have to have the money in the morning or he'll sell it!"

When Father came home that night his mother waited until she thought Bill was in bed before she began to speak. The boy was not in bed. He was sitting in the darkness on the top step listening. He knew there was going to be a fight and he relished it. She explained the case and said that she was going to buy the bike in the morning. His father was so angry that his paper slid down from his lap to the floor. He hollered and wrangled and said he wouldn't think of it and the boy got his own way too much and finally he said:

"Bessie, you're spoiling that boy."

"All right," Mrs. Wister said softly. "I'll pay for it out of my own money."

Mr. Wister grumbled a little more. Then he said: "Bessie, I'll give you the money."

The boy rose silently and tiptoed to bed. He had done a hard

day's work and had earned a rest. Now he would avoid his father for a few days.

1910

THE GERMANTOWN CRICKET CLUB, like the flush toilet, is an institution in America. In those days it was a broad blanket of greensward with grandstands and tennis courts and cricket grounds and gravel drives and a picture-card clubhouse and Tom Collinseys and pink ladies on the front porch. It was built for the exercise of those who can afford not to walk.

Its walls are hung with ancient chromos of men with mutton-chop whiskers holding cricket bats and standing in the popping crease leaning slightly to the left. And underneath each picture is a legend telling who these gentlemen were and what fabulous runs they scored in the good old days.

Bill's bicycle was almost three months old when he heard that he had been invited to play cricket at the club. There was to be a costume pageant in August. The gentlemen and ladies were to come attired in the fashion of the 1880s and one of the features of the fun was to be a cricket match between the old veterans and the juniors.

It had been talked of around Germantown for two months and everyone felt that it was going to be a jolly afternoon indeed. Bill knew nothing about cricket, but he was excited and confident at first. His father suggested that he take lessons. He engaged old George Bromfield of the club for the purpose. Certain hours of certain days were set aside for tutoring. But Bill seldom showed up for lessons.

When he did, he hardly noticed the short, white-haired Englishman nor heard his bottom-of-the-barrel baritone as he tried to correct the boy's batting stance. What Bill saw was the empty stands filled with people shouting acclaim and women fluttering their kerchiefs at him and he could hear the surflike roar as he mentally rapped the ball for runs.

Old George would intone: "Now, William . . ." and his

great flat feet would plop into the proper stance and he would bowl the ball. Sometimes the boy hit it. Sometimes he didn't. But he always flailed at it desperately as though it were a rattlesnake which had caught him inside a phone booth.

The day of the big pageant came closer. And Bill became nervous. He found it difficult to conjure up the picture of the acclaiming crowd. Instead he could see himself being bowled out ignominiously and he could hear the ladies murmur: "What a pity!" and he could hear the men chuckle and say: "The kid missed it by a mile."

The crowds were in the stands when he arrived. It was a hot, shiny day and the grandstands were sprinkled with lavender parasols and chartreuse dresses and little girls with lace-tiered pantalettes and men with false mutton-chop whiskers and black waistcoats with white piping. The waiters perspired as they wheeled into the crowds with trays of tall glasses; horses stomped impatiently in the gravel driveway and carriages glistened with sun, while coachmen touched their silk hats and left to return later. Everyone agreed that it was a great day for the club.

Bill sat in the dressing room tightening his shin guards and sweating it out and wishing he were far away. Then someone hollered, "Wister!" He got up and walked out like a vest-pocket gladiator. When he saw the Roman senators and their wives he didn't feel like a gladiator at all. He kept swallowing to kill the dryness in the back of his throat and remembering that his mother and father and Elizabeth were there and Grandfather Wister and Grandfather Morgan and all the other Wisters and Morgans and all the people in the whole world and he felt all those eyes upon him.

Uncle Bill Morgan was playing with the veterans. Mr. Newell was bowling. The men on the other team watched the boy trudge up to the wicket, bat in hand, and they called out mock warnings: "Now watch out for this fellow!" "He's a hard one." "Watch him closely!" Behind the wicket stood old Cas Gordon as wicket keep. He was murmuring soft reassurance: "Now take it easy, boy."

The parasols began to dance and sway; some looked like big colored balloons and appeared to fly off into the sky. Old Mr. Newell was smiling easily and then the ball came up. It came up slowly, like a black bubble, and it bounced lazily on the sod. Bill swung violently and barely tipped it and it caromed between two fielders. Bill was supposed to run down the crease and his other man was supposed to run up it. But the boy became so fascinated that he stood and watched the ball.

Then, without warning, he tossed the bat away and ran madly, not down the crease but toward where first base would have been had he been playing baseball. That did it. A bedlam of sound hit him and he knew that everyone was laughing and they knew that he was just a scatterbrained kid who didn't really know how to play at all. So he stopped. He picked up the bat. Then he tripped over the bat and went sprawling. The crowd howled. Then he jumped up and got back into the box before he could be caught off. His opposite number had to run back down the crease, runless.

The next ball was pitched. He barely tipped that one. And then, a moment later, he wished that he could die and make them all sorry. Because he did the same thing again. He broke for first base. On the third pitch he missed the ball completely and the wicket went down. He had been bowled out.

Bill hung his head and walked off the field. A few people pattered politely. For months after that, whenever he was introduced to strange men by his father, they were sure to break into raucous guffaws and say:

"Oh, you're the boy who played baseball on the cricket field!"

He never played cricket again.

1911

ROBERT WARD was a mannerly boy. Everyone liked him. He was eighteen and "sensible." He had five brothers and they were all pretty sensible too. Robert came to the Wister home one day and asked Mr. and Mrs. Wister how they'd like to send Bill to Camp Susquehannock for two months. The camp was on

Tripp Lake away up in the corner of Pennsylvania near Binghamton. Robert was a counselor there. So were all his brothers.

He said that there would be swimming and handball and baseball and campfires and sleeping in tents and fine food and only the nicest boys from the nicest families in all Philadelphia would be there. Mrs. Wister said yes. Then Mr. Wister nodded. The boy was ten. Bill liked the idea too, but he was worried.

His mother bought the best of everything: swim suit, jerseys, sweat shirts, running shorts, moccasins, towels, knife, and one rubber sheet. That last item was one reason why he felt tense about the trip. He needed it. But he dreaded to think what would happen if the boys at camp discovered that Bill Wister wet the bed. They wouldn't understand. Long ago, wetting the bed, plus a little yelling, meant the sudden turning on of lights in the room; it meant Julia running around pulling out drawers to find fresh pajamas; and it meant Mother washing and drying him. It was good for about fifteen minutes of attention. Now it was a subconsciously directed habit.

But how could a handsome, growing boy explain that he could not stop wetting the bed? How could he tell them of the gripping fear when he went to bed? The fear that was always justified by dawn?

There were five other boys standing on the platform at Queen Lane Station when he arrived with his family. There was a lot of luggage and Mrs. Wister had packed a tin box with lunch. She and Father nodded at the other mothers and fathers and smiled at their sons. Elizabeth was present to see her brother off on his first long trip. She never mattered particularly in his private little world.

The train trip was fun. The boys all said their farewells casually and took the fervent parental kisses with bland bravado, but when the train began to ease away and the waving hands and hankies on the platform grew smaller and smaller, the boys sat back in silence to think, and what they were thinking about was home and that sickening feeling that seeps into the stomachs of little men at a time like that.

After a while their mood changed and they began to laugh

and joke and become better acquainted. Soon they were racing up and down the aisles, yelling and pretending to lose their balance when the train leaned on the turns. They raised windows and stuck their arms out too far and everyone got at least one cinder in his eye. Everyone said it was a fine trip. It ended at 4 P.M.

From the station, wagons took the boys up over the hilly dirt roads. When they got over one very high hill they saw below a hunting lodge with a natural bark veranda. It was in a saucer valley and two hundred yards below was a dish of blue lake; woods fringed the edges and there was a little island out in the center. Near the lodge were three or four tents and a small group of wooden houses with flat roofs.

Bill got down off the wagon. All the sensible Wards were there and he discovered that he was the youngest kid in camp. That didn't hurt. It helped. It licensed him to get away with things that older boys would not forgive in themselves. And Bill already knew that it was important to seek out friends who are older.

He found out about those flat sheds. The sides were on hinges and could be hung outward. Inside each one were about twenty cots. He liked the sheds. They were better-looking than the tents and he made up his mind he was going to sleep in a shed.

His counselor assigned him to a cot in the rear of a tent. He said that if they had no objection he'd prefer a shed cot. The counselor said that sheds had to be earned. All newcomers were assigned to tents. He didn't want justice. He wanted special consideration.

He went into his tent and learned that neatness was important and that every boy had a shelf for his effects and that his suitcase and shoes belonged under the bed. None of that is pleasant to a boy accustomed to dropping his clothing in the center of the floor and watching someone else pick it up. The more he learned about the camp the less he liked it.

He worried about the wetting more than ever. He went to bed and the lights were extinguished. Then he sneaked his rubber sheet out of his suitcase and spread it across his cot under his

hips and squirmed and fretted and thought of how nice and warm home was and how he never had to worry there and how sympathetic everyone was no matter what he did.

He awakened just before dawn. He didn't have to feel the rubber sheet. His pajamas were soaked. He sat up in bed, frightened. Then he got out of bed on the side next to the rear of the tent and slowly pulled the rubber sheet and the blankets out with him. He ducked under the canvas and dragged the stuff across the needle-stiff grass and through the frosty morning dampness to the baseball diamond.

He sat on home plate shivering, waiting for the sun to come up. His teeth chattered and he hugged his knees and wished that the sun would come up quick and hot. After a while the night sky turned apple-green and then streaks of yellow creased the green and then a great blob of blood silhouetted the trees and the forehead of the sun grew over the edge of the world. Bill hoped everyone would remain asleep; he laid the blankets out wet side up and stood there until his pajamas were only damp. Then he sneaked back through the rear of the tent and folded the rubber sheet, placed it deep inside his valise, and laid there shivering in spasms—happy that the boys were still asleep.

That day he asked if he could try one of the canoes upended on the shore. "No," the counselor said. "You can't have canoe privileges unless you can swim out to the island."

Before breakfast the new boys were shown the big lodge. There was a balcony around the four sides of the great room and twelve doors leading to twelve private rooms for the big shots. There was a great fieldstone fireplace, and the pennants of Princeton, Amherst, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Penn State, Carnegie Tech, Pittsburgh, and others. He was told that all meals would be served on the veranda and that almost all of the food came from the camp farm. At six each evening the cook would ring a big brass bell. That would mean dinner, come a-running.

Afterward Bill was told about Frankie. Frankie had one of the twelve rooms inside the lodge. He was nineteen, an old-timer at the camp. He had a pointed head and was a half notch better

than an imbecile. He spoke whiningly and he feared all young boys.

Bill began to tease him. He made fun of him, he mimicked him, and he stood away from Frankie and made grimaces at him. One night he went too far. Frankie arose and chased him. Bill ran laughing into the woods. Then he stopped and looked back. The laughter died when he saw Frankie pick up a hatchet. He turned and ran as fast as he could and suddenly, without turning, he knew that Frankie had heaved the ax. It came singing and passed his head and whacked into a tree a little bit ahead and slightly to the right. Bill kept running and he didn't know that, directly ahead, someone had nailed a big plank waist-high between two trees. He hit it flying. It bit deeply into his belly. His feet came up on the far side of the plank, his head went down, and they met.

He was unconscious for a half hour.

By day he spent a lot of time charming his way into the hearts of the older boys. They all thought he was a nice sort of fellow. Then he began an active campaign for a cot in one of the wooden shacks. This was simple. Bill stood in the doorway of one, glanced admiringly around, and said: "Gee, would I love to be over here with you fellows! Could we have fun!" That, with its accompanying chords and variations, brought results. In a short time the boys in the shack were unconsciously carrying the alto of it: "Gee, we'd love to have you! Do you think it can be fixed?"

Once they were committed, Bill went to a counselor and said: "You know, most of my friends from back home are in that shack over there. It sure would be fine if I could get bed space with them. You see, we all know each other. . . ." At first the counselor said no. Later he said all right.

Bill didn't like the cot he got. But that didn't matter. He browsed around until he found one he liked. Then he got better acquainted with the fellow who had it. That boy was amazed to discover himself swapping cots with Bill Wister and pleasantly

surprised to find that he had two new jerseys and a fielder's mitt. In the mornings, just before inspection, Bill always found that his was the only cot not neat. To cover up, he always bought someone into cleaning up his mess. On mornings when he was assigned to clean the place up he forgot it and made sure that he was off somewhere else. One morning, when his tentmates were trying to earn new privileges, he ruined their chances because his shoes were filthy. At night he dropped his clothes on the floor.

He swam out to the island to earn canoe privileges, won first prize in the diving contest, and got himself elected captain of the baseball team by promising everything to everybody. He had been there two weeks when a counselor came up and said:

"The king wants to see you, Wister."

The king was the chief counselor.

"Me?" said Bill. "What does he want to see me about?"

"I don't know. But he said, 'Right away.' "

All the apprehension that goes with steady insecurity came back. What could the king possibly want to see him about? What possible . . . ?

He ran to the main lodge. He walked into the little main office smiling. The king was busy with mail. He didn't look up right away. When he did he ignored the disarming smile.

"We've decided to move you over to another tent, Wister. You know that tent where the Blivens boy is and those other fellows from Germantown? Well, we thought that would be fine for you."

"Me? But I don't want to move. I'm happy where I am."

The king came over and put his hand on Bill's shoulder. His voice was sympathetically soft.

"Now don't you think you'd be better off in the other tent?"

"No!" bitterly. "No, I don't. I don't want to go. I want to stay where I am."

"Well now, I'm sorry, Wister. I really am. But you'll have to go over. It has already been decided."

"I'm getting along all right!"

The king sighed. Sometimes this damned job . . .

"Look. I may as well tell you. We're moving you because none of the boys in your shack like you. They don't want you, Wister."

That was the end of the world. That's when the heart pulses in the heel. It's the challenger's glove across the cheek; the doctor removing the stethoscope and looking at your face with new interest and murmuring: "I don't want to alarm you, but . . ."

William Wynne Wister stood there. He didn't feel dizzy and he didn't feel numb. But he knew that something frightful had just happened to him. Something that he could never forget. Something that would leave scar tissue across his life.

"What have I done?"

Four words from a ten-year-old. A boy's Gethsemane.

"Well," the king said, and he sounded like someone speaking through the wrong end of a megaphone, "you always want your own way. You never follow through on your duties. You never pick up your clothes. You don't co-operate. The boys tell me that you refuse to do your part."

Tears came then. He kept his hands at his side and his chin began to quiver; he tried to stop it but it quivered more. Then that feeling of rising pity crept up through his throat. His head was bowed to his chest, he shut his eyes, his breathing was convulsed, and his face was suddenly contorted. Then the tears came unwanted. They staggered down his cheeks and dropped onto his shirt and made little dark stains. It took a few minutes to regain control. The head remained down.

"I'll do anything to stay in that shack! Anything! Won't you please let me stay there? I'm terribly sorry. I'll do anything in the world to show how sorry I am. Please! Oh, please!"

The king stood there saying nothing and clasping and unclasping his hands behind his back. After a long while he said:

"Well, I'll have to talk with the fellows and see what they say."

"Can't you call some of the boys over now, please?"

"Let me see. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll call Jones and Temly right now. Let's hear what they have to say."

They were sent for. They came. Bill was standing in a corner

with tearstains on his face. They looked at him and they looked at the king. The king explained briefly.

"If you fellows will give him another chance, Wister says he'll work this thing out. He'll show you he can co-operate."

Temly looked at Wister, then at the king. He stole a fast look at Jones.

"Well, we don't know. We don't want to be hard on Wister. We've got to work together over there and every fellow must do his part and—well, we didn't want to be mean with Bill, but we couldn't help it." He glanced at Jones again. "All right, sir. We'll give him another chance."

Bill lifted his head. He smiled bravely through the tears. He thanked them. Over and over and over. He said he was ready to do all the work if they'd just say the word. They said no, thanks, that they were sorry that this thing had to happen. If he'd just keep his own part of the tent neat and clean they'd be satisfied.

He did. He kept his clothes neat and his shoes shined and he yelled: "Here, give me that broom!" and everyone thought what an awful mistake they had made in him. He became even more conscious of the bed-wetting because now he was convinced that no one could have missed the odor. His nervousness increased.

His aggressiveness shrank. He stopped boasting. He became more solicitous. He tried hard, desperately hard, to make the fellows like him. He gave them so much surface co-operation that they mistook it for the real thing.

Before the season ended there was a big baseball game. Someone introduced him to Zelda Thompson, the belle of the nearest town. She was ten and she had jet curls and a pony and cart. Bill charmed her. On the day of the big game Zelda drove him to the diamond. They passed all the players who were walking and Bill felt proud as he bounced by them.

The game isn't worth the telling. But Bill's big play is. He was in left field. He knew that if anyone hit a man-sized fly in his direction he'd drop it. It came in a late inning and it was an echo of the cricket match. The batter hit a long one between left and center. Bill ran for it, knowing that he'd never be able to

hold it. The center fielder was racing for it too. It popped into Bill's glove and popped right out again. Then he crashed into the center fielder and fell in a faint.

The batter rounded third for home. He kept looking over his shoulder. Both teams came out on the run. The counselors rubbed the back of Bill's neck and someone got ice and Zelda stood in the pony cart with her little fist in her teeth. She looked horrified as the boys carried Bill from the field. Bill wasn't unconscious of course. He hadn't been hurt. He pretended to be trying to come to, and someone said: "You feel all right? Better lie down awhile. Feel dizzy? Maybe the doctor ought to have a look."

Later, around the campfire, no one spoke about the game itself. They talked of Wister, the hero, who almost killed himself trying to catch a fly ball. Bill sat and made deprecating motions with his hands. He didn't interrupt.

### 1913

THINGS BEGAN to happen fast. Elizabeth was almost seventeen and there were subdebutante parties and dances. The family moved from Greene Street and took an apartment in downtown Philadelphia. Then Father took Mother on a Mediterranean cruise, Uncle Bill died on an operating table, Aunt Agnes married a man who looked like Andy Mellon, and Bill was sent to her home in Bryn Mawr. Everything was popping fast.

Aunt Agnes had six hunters and she assigned a big bay named Pennant to her favorite nephew. There were two older cousins there, both girls, who made a big fuss over Bill and introduced him to their gentlemen friends. He was driven to school in a big twin-six Packard. One day Johnny Martel came down from New York to visit one of the cousins.

Johnny is a most unimportant character. But he was the first man Bill noticed and assessed. Before that men were merely things that boys grew up into. But now Bill noticed that there were all types and kinds and shapes of men and he picked this one as his ideal.

Johnny Martel was handsome. He was also tall and he wore shiny shoes and two-hundred-dollar suits and he laughed and was at ease with girls. He had fine manners and spoke with some authority about the things that were going on in the world. He drank with authority too.

He was Bill Wister's first idol. It is a pointless coincidence that Johnny now lives permanently in an insane asylum.

### 1914

THE LAW of averages caught up with Mr. Wister. He had been doing well in the insurance business. The Wisters always did well. He never talked about his successes at home. And so, when reverses came, he didn't discuss those either.

Bill was to be sent to Hill School. Mr. Wister borrowed the tuition money from Grandpa Wister. And paid it back. But the alarming thing was that he had to borrow it at all. After he got the money Hill School said that Bill's mathematics wasn't up to standard and that he would not be permitted to enter.

The answer to that was a private math tutor. The man taught and taught and taught. Bill didn't listen and didn't understand because he didn't like algebra. On two occasions the tutor moaned: "I don't know whether I ought to take this money from your folks."

The entrance examination arrived, and Bill understood none of it. So he turned on the charm and begged the tutor to do the paper.

"Lord knows I shouldn't," he said. "But I'll try to miss just enough of these so that you'll get around eighty-three."

A week later Mr. Wister got a letter from Hill saying they were pleasantly surprised at the improvement in William's mathematics and that they were ready to take him.

The Wisters were justly proud. They examined the clothing chart again and bought Bill two blue suits, two rough tweeds for the classroom, four pairs of shoes, a dozen pairs of socks, and hankies and underwear, all of the very best.

The trip to Pottstown was depressing. He felt nervous. He didn't want to go. The great unknown was in front of him again. The world of unsympathetic reality was just around the bend, as he walked to the school with his mother. He saw a low stone wall and several friendless and lifeless buildings. The headmaster was in his office at the head of a receiving line. To each he presented a sudden toothy smile and a cold, one-jerk handshake. Bill didn't like him. He didn't like the school. He didn't like Pottstown. He wanted to go home and stay there.

Mrs. Wister sensed it. She took him around the grounds and became ecstatic at everything she saw. "Oh, Bill! Isn't this beautiful? And look at those buildings! Aren't they beautiful? Ooh, Bill! They have an athletic field! You're just going to love it here!"

Bill began to dread the place. He met Lonnie Telecamp, his roommate. Lonnie had a book in his hand. That finished him as far as Bill was concerned. Then Mother left.

"Now pitch in and do your work," she said. "Study hard and make us proud of you. You can do it, Bill. And I know that after you've made some friends you're going to love Hill."

She walked away. He stood in front of the main building and watched her grow smaller and smaller and his world of security grew smaller and smaller just as it had that day on the train when he looked back at the folks on the platform. He felt miserable. He didn't want to talk to Telecamp. He didn't want to talk to the grinning headmaster. He stood it for five hours.

Then he sent a wire to his mother: "Please come and pick me up." He wandered into the common room and looked around. There was a student standing against a wall, with his hands in his pockets and his chin on his chest. Bill knew loneliness at a glance. The boy said his name was Calvosa, that this was his first day, and that he hated Hill. Bill liked him. They talked and commiserated with each other until eight o'clock. Then the headmaster walked by, smiling, and said that "kiddies" should be in their rooms.

That broke up the only friendly tie Bill had. He went to his

room to feel sorry for himself. But Telecamp was sitting there studying. So self-commiseration was denied him. Then lights out came and the bed-wetting came to mind. He worried about that as he lay on his bed with his hands clasped under his head and stared at the blackness above and wondered how much pressure it would take to convince Mother that Hill was impossible.

He stayed awake until after midnight and went to the bathroom with fair assurance that he wouldn't die of shame in the morning. He was sound asleep at 2 A.M. when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was the fire watchman.

"Get up, son," he whispered. "Get up and go down the hall to the bathroom."

Then Bill knew that his mother must have told the headmaster, who in turn had told the fire watchman to awaken the boy nightly to break him of the habit. Magically, it worked. Each night he went to sleep knowing that he had nothing to worry about. He never wet the bed again.

In the morning he sat out on the wall with Cal. They were both depressed and assisted each other in staying that way. Bill stared moodily at a Reading train flashing by.

"You know, Cal," he said, "if you followed those rails down that way they'd lead almost directly to my house."

That evening his mother phoned. Her tone was worried.

"What's the matter? Is anything wrong?"

"Everything is wrong."

"Can't you be more specific? Can't you tell me?"

"No. I can't talk very well. I'm talking through a switchboard and I've got to see you to tell you about it. There's too much to tell, Mother."

"Well, I'll see you soon. Your father and I are planning a trip up there in about four weeks."

"Oh no. I've got to see you right away. How about tomorrow morning?"

"Gracious! I've just been up there, Bill. Can't you wait until we get there?"

"No. I must see you." Tears were coming. "I must, Mother."

"All right. I'll take the same train we took."

He left the telephone walking on air. He couldn't stop smiling. He even smiled when the watchman awakened him at two. In the morning he arose, ate well, and sat on the front wall watching for her.

His spirits soared even more at sight of her and he told her everything frightful that he could imagine. He made it quite plain that he could not bear one more moment of Hill.

"Well, Bill, the first thing I'll do is have a talk with the headmaster. Then I'll come back and see you."

Bill didn't like that. He began to worry again. He walked up and down and imagined the grinning headmaster telling her that Bill was getting along just dandy, that he was homesick, like all other boys, and that he would get over it in a few days. In a half hour she was back. One look told Bill he was going to stay.

"Now look," she said. "I've talked to the headmaster. He likes you very much and he wants you to stay here. He says it takes many of the boys a little while to get used to the school. I want you to stay and try this thing out."

"But, Mother! You don't understand how terrible—"

"Yes, I do. But I want you to stay. Maybe around Christmastime when you come home we can talk about the whole thing again."

He was disappointed, but that last remark made him feel that he had won a partial victory. Christmas put Hill on a temporary basis. After she had left he told students that he wouldn't be at Hill after Christmas, that his mother was taking him from the school, and that he didn't care particularly what he did at school between now and then.

He sought more friends, choosing them carefully. He avoided those with scholastic ambition and sought those who hated Hill, swore, and had an appreciation of the athletic side of life. He became a campus big shot by affecting academic disinterest. He got into a group of about ten boys who felt as he did. It was just before his fourteenth birthday that he began to sneak into the boiler room to smoke cigarettes. He also smoked them out of his dormitory window and down by the Reading right of way.

That was where the Freight Jumpers Club was formed. The members earned ratings. Some were high, some low, but everyone tried interminably to get a higher rating. The idea was to watch a freight train coming down. The boys judged its speed. If it was going slow no one wanted it because it wouldn't increase his rating. If it was fast a boy would drop his cigarette and say: "This one is mine!" Then, after the locomotive and a few cars flashed by, he'd turn and begin to run with the train, running faster and ever faster, and try to time himself to catch onto a side ladder without falling under the wheels.

The train went downhill at that point and the engineers used it to pick up speed. The problem was to try to get off near the bridge below and walk back. All of the boys in the club reached adulthood with a full complement of legs.

At Christmastime Bill brought up the subject of Hill. But his arguments did not convince his parents. They sent him back. He began to hit the skids. He didn't study. He became a spitball flicker. He was summoned before the Sixth Form Self-Governing Committee—a group of seniors—for lack of co-operation and for not being a good student in general. They also cited the fact that he had been caught smoking in bounds. They could have recommended dismissal but they didn't. They thought a reprimand would be enough.

The next day Bill ran away from school. When he arrived home his mother was expecting him because the headmaster had phoned that the boy was missing. She took him back the following morning and had another long talk with the headmaster.

Hill is High Episcopal. Church attendance is compulsory. But Bill was ringleader of a little band whose immature souls were numb. The prefect's wife, whom everyone called Mrs. L. D., was very religious and tried as hard as she could to make the boys conscious of their spiritual duties. She had a man named Steve Toland attend services and report to her the names of boys who appeared to be apathetic.

One day Steve buttonholed Bill and said: "Mrs. L. D. wants to see you in the sky parlor." That meant her apartment on top of the main building. It seemed that she also desired the presence

of Dave Calhen and the rest of the gang. When they reached the sky parlor she told them how grieved she felt because they didn't care for God. Then, while they stood shifting from foot to foot, she prayed loudly and long over them. They waited until she finished and then they thanked her gravely and left and continued to miss services.

In the spring Bill lay awake in bed one night. The Sixth Form was having a dance. The first transcontinental telephone service had just been inaugurated and the band was playing "Hello, Frisco, Hello." He lay there and thought about the pretty girls and dreamed courtly Galahad dreams of the let-me-kill-myself-for-you type.

When summer vacation came the headmaster went down to Philadelphia, spats, cane, and all, to see Mr. Wister and tell him that, unless a tutor were hired for Master William right now, he would not be eligible to return to Hill in the fall.

## 1915

SOMEHOW, when fall came, Hill was pressed into trying Bill again. There were elaborate promises of doing better, trying harder, and burning the midnight oil. He didn't do any of these things of course. But he did reach an important milestone.

He had his first drink.

It was Christmas. Bill and Dave Calhen took the same train out of Pottstown. Dave had a pocketful of money and was going to join his folks in Palm Beach. He felt good and yelled: "Say, Wis! You drink?"

Bill grinned wisely and said: "Sure. Don't you?"

"Certainly. Well, when we get to Philly, let's go to a hotel and get drunk."

"Good idea."

They were too young to be served at the Bellevue-Stratford bar. So at 10 A.M. they took a room and called a waiter.

"Champagne," said Dave, loosening his tie. "Lots and lots of it."

The waiter looked at the fuzz-free faces. "How much?" he said.

"Christ!" bellowed Dave. "Fill up the bathtub!"

Dave talked of the swell parties ahead down in Florida and Bill boasted about the big winter doings in Philadelphia. Pretty soon the waiter came up with a single bottle of champagne; he popped the cork, took his money, and went away. The boys drank a few and toasted "getting the hell out of Hill prison." After a few more Bill became frightened. He was afraid he would get drunk. So he began to stagger and lurch and pretend that he "could feel it."

"Boy!" he yelled. "I'm as drunk as a coot!"

"Me too!" Dave howled. "I'm gonna have to pull myself together."

Both were secretly afraid of passing out. Bill staggered against a chest of drawers and fell across the bed and Dave swore at the top of his lungs. They had a whale of a time. Bill accompanied Dave to the Florida train. He had to put Dave on it and Dave stood in the vestibule of the car, staggering and hollering: "So long, Wis! So long, Wis!" People began to look and Bill began to like the attention.

When they got back to Hill after the holidays both lied.

"You guys should have seen Wis at the Bellevue-Stratford! Boy, was he charged!"

"You should have seen Dave getting on that Florida train! Boy, he could just about make it!"

## 1916

THAT SUMMER Bill wore long trousers. He went up to York Harbor, Maine, with Aunt Agnes and three hundred dollars. He was over fifteen years old and he wore gray flannels and a blue double-breasted coat and when girls were around he began to flare a little at the nostrils.

York Harbor was pretty. It had a cove for bathing, a fistful of authentic fishermen, a lot of black rocky hills, gray shingled

cottages, some small hotels, tennis courts and a golf course, a lot of Philadelphians, and an ancient prohibition law. New Hampshire was wet and Portsmouth was only seven miles away, so the conversation and the drinks sparkled at York Harbor.

What Bill wanted most of all that summer was not a cot in a shed but Connie George. Not for the great good fun that there might be in a tall, willowy body. No. He wanted to wear her like a Congressional Medal of Honor. He wanted to take her out with that look-what-I've-got expression on his face. He wanted everyone to know that he, a boy of fifteen, could date the most exciting girl at the resort. He was, he felt, a reasonable facsimile of his man-of-the-world idol, Johnny Martel.

There were certain obstacles. She was older by a few years and she had more dates than she could handle. There was that gay dog Chandler Burlingame and his Stutz Bearcat. There was her old friend Jack Kennedy. And Tom Kelly too. Tom had a crew haircut and eyes that tried eternally to rendezvous behind his razor nose. He also had a super-six Hudson.

In a week Bill was ready to ask Connie. She had already shown that she liked him and had referred to him as a very attractive kid. So he jacked up his nerve and asked her.

"Ever go up to York Beach?" he said.

She turned on the rich smile. "Yes, I love to go up there."

"Would you go up with me some night?"

"Bill, I can't think of anything I'd rather do."

"How about Friday?"

"Really, Bill, I'd love it."

He wasn't excited. But he kept trying to leap over a cottage. Then he went around telling a few fellows, in a jaded sort of way of course, about how Connie and he were going up to York Beach to the dance Friday. The initial ecstasy kept him off his feet for a day or two. And then he began to worry. He wondered how he could impress her. He was sure she was too much for him. He wouldn't know what to do, or what to say, and especially what not to do.

On Wednesday he conceived the idea of having a few drinks

Friday. He was unconsciously reaching for the crutch. Then he improved on the idea. It might be bright to have a few drinks *before* he met her and then bring a bottle to the dance as well. It would impress the hell out of her.

He went down to the wharf to see Willy Hillrick. Willy was twenty-eight. With white kinky hair and mahogany skin, and he wore denim and smelled of fish.

"Willy," he said, "I'm going to a party Friday night and I want some liquor."

Willy took a slow look at the golden hair, the immature body and the hairless face.

"What the hell does a kid like you want liquor for?" he said.

Bill tried desperately to throw that one off.

"Oh, I'm not as young as you think I am. Hell, I've been drinking for years!" He waited a moment for that to sink in. Then: "Can you help me out, Willy? I've got money. I can make it worth your while."

Willy hesitated no more.

"I'll have to hire a car to get down to Portsmouth."

"Look," said Bill, sure of his man now, "I want you to hire a big car and take me down to Portsmouth to get this liquor. Then I want you to drive me up to York Beach right in front of the pavilion. I'm going to be dressed up, Willy. I want you to be dressed too."

"Well, the car would cost eight dollars. I'll take five for myself. The liquor will be extra. I'll tell you what—I'll let you know tomorrow."

"All right. Fine."

Friday evening Willy drove up in a 1914 Marmon. It was a half story high. He wore a faded serge suit, a white shirt with ragged collar, and shoes that quite evidently hadn't been on speaking terms for years.

"Hop in, kid."

Bill didn't like that. He got in and sat stiffly in back. Willy drove pretty fast. It was getting dark and he kept pretty much in the center of a tar road, then over the long Kittery Bridge and

the barrage of loose planks, then more road and the houses of Portsmouth and several violent swings around corners, and then he pulled up in front of a saloon. Willy got out.

"Now you wait here," he said.

He was gone about ten minutes. He came out wiping his mouth on his sleeve. He had a paper bag.

"Here," he said.

"What is it?"

"Port wine."

"I asked for whisky."

"You got no business drinking whisky. I don't drink whisky. This won't hurt you, kid. Have a go at it."

Willy pulled the cork and kept the bottle inside the paper bag. He started the car off roaring. Bill leaned back and let the wine flow into his mouth until his cheeks were fat and then he swallowed. He did this five times. He put the cork back in, tapping it lightly. The wine left a Christmasy taste and he felt it seep deep into his belly and spread outwardly warm and fine and firm. The tension fled from his body and he felt the sudden honing of mind and wit and the easy opulence that goes with it.

The car was going fast and the headlights were yellow against the black woods and the night beyond.

"Willy." The boy spoke loudly against the wind. "You got a girl?"

"Naw," he shouted. "Ain't got no time for them."

Bill was playing his ace of trumps and he wasn't going to be put off because Willy had thrown down a deuce. "I'm going to meet the most popular girl in York Harbor."

"Yeah? What's her name?"

"Connie George. You know her mother?"

"Sure. That's some family."

"Well, she's got lots of sweethearts but I'm head man." Willy said nothing. "I've followed that girl all over the country, Willy. Down to Palm Beach, up to Maine, all over. People don't generally know this, but we're practically engaged."

Unwittingly Willy tossed a king on the ace.

"You don't say! Gosh! Them girls cost money!"

Bill took a long slug. There was no secondary warmth. But the opulence fattened and he began to think that Willy was a very nice person, well worthy of anyone's friendship. "You know, Willy? I like you. I mean that. You're a helluva swell guy. I liked you from the first day I met you."

Willy glanced quickly back.

"You work?"

"No. I inherited a pile from my grandfather."

The third and fourth drinks added nothing to him and took nothing away. He didn't want to talk to Willy any more. He wanted to think. He kept thinking: Now this is wonderful. This is the way it ought to be all the time. I'll be the most popular fellow at the dance. I can't understand what I was worried about. Can't understand it at all. I ought to stop worrying once and for all. It doesn't mean anything anyway. What have I got to worry about?

He looked out front over the headlights and was astounded to discover that the telegraph poles along the sides of the road had left their moorings and begun to come out into the center of the road and stand there brazenly until it was almost too late and then dash violently back to the side of the road. He wondered why this should be. Superacutely, he told himself that it wasn't. It was the genie in the bottle who was conjuring these feats of magic. Well, the hell with the genie and his telegraph poles.

Bill took another long pull at the bottle. They passed York Harbor and went up the eight miles to York Beach. He saw the lights of the town and sank the bottle, bag and all, into his top-coat pocket. He saw the big winking carbon lights in front of the movie. Next door, he saw the pavilion with its garish gold fixtures, its lights, pool tables, and fortunetellers. Willy stopped the car and Bill paid him and got out.

He staggered. He walked slightly hunched forward and his feet moved straight ahead but the center of gravity kept shifting so that he was on an intermittent bias. He could not have

stopped staggering. But he didn't want to anyway. He walked through the pavilion to the back and the ticket taker stared at him. When Bill tried to stand still he almost fell. The ticket taker seemed to be unsteady on his feet. His head kept floating loosely from side to side like a balloon on a string.

"What do you want?"

"Lookin' for m'wife."

The people inside were dancing gracefully up and down the walls and two couples were on the ceiling. "Gotta go somewhere and pull m'self together," he mumbled, and staggered out.

He went next door to the movies. He paid and went in. The floor was level and the patrons sat in loose chairs. He went up front. As he sat down he tossed his head back to look up at the screen. His head cracked the back of the chair loudly. He turned around. Scores of pairs of eyes were pinned on him. He felt sick. He got up and staggered out and he became sicker and was afraid that he'd fall. He wandered across the street and then he saw Burlingame's parked Stutz. He opened the door and fell into the driver's seat. Then it got to him. He leaned his cheek out over the door and felt the coolness of the leather against his skin. His stomach was hit by lightning and the spasms came and faded without his willing it. His mouth hung lifelessly open and he moaned and murmured feebly for assistance but no one came, so he did his personal dying the lonely way.

He managed to borrow a little strength some time later. He staggered out of the car and wandered dazedly down the street and over to the beach. That was all he remembered. The body had been goaded back into action but the mulish mind had had enough. It ceased to function. It went to sleep. He awakened at six in the morning, flat on his back on the sand. The breakers were curling up jade and foamy white a few feet from his heels. His clothes were damp. He got up sober and startled and worried about not meeting Connie.

He was hung over in a simple, silly way. There was no headache. No Harz Mountain canaries in the tummy. He just felt like giggling. Except when he thought of Connie. Then he wor-

ried again. He hired a car and drove back down to York Harbor. There was crustaceous vomit on his clothes. He felt tired and silly and he crept upstairs and went to bed.

At ten o'clock that morning his cousin Bobby, a pretty girl of sixteen, stood at the bottom step and called up for Bill to rise and shine. He did. He told her the story of his escapade and she went out and did exactly what he wanted her to. She told everyone. By the time he got to the beach it was the main topic. Connie heard about it. She was sweet. She laughed and said she thought it was very amusing. She said she felt disappointed that he hadn't kept the appointment but those things happen.

Burlingame was standing listening. Suddenly he pointed a finger at Bill in mock anger and roared: "So you're the son of a bitch who draped the lunch on my running board!" Everyone shrieked. Bill felt like a boy who has been trying to join a man's fraternity and awakens to find the pin on his vest.

## 1917

SUMMER WAS playing an encore. In the evenings the strolling crowds gathered around the trucks parked in downtown Philadelphia. The posters on the side said: "Uncle Sam Needs You!" "Hoch the Kaiser!" "Are You Doing Your Bit?" And many other things that spelled enlistment in a violent struggle far away. The trucks were lighted with big floods and a sergeant stood on the tailboard, pointing his finger at men in the crowd below and shouting until the cords in his neck swelled purple.

Inside the truck a man tinkled a piano and sometimes the crowd sang "Where Do We Go from Here, Boys, Where Do We Go from Here?" And then the sergeant would demand to know who was going to be the first one to enlist in the good old United States Army. Sometimes a man would step forward sheepishly, smiling timidly, and the sergeant would grin and lean down and yank him up onto the tailboard.

"Now here's a fine, red-blooded American!" he'd bellow. "Who's gonna be second?" Of course Bill stepped forward.

"Here's a fine-looking boy!" the sergeant would bellow, and as the sergeant pulled him up onto the tailboard the crowd would cheer. He'd stay in the truck and after a while, when the sergeant felt that he had exhausted the patriots, he would order the truck rolled to Thirteenth and Walnut and then down Broad and in front of Trainer's saloon and then down Chestnut and then back to the recruiting office on Arch Street, where all the volunteers would jump off the tailboard and go inside and answer questions and take an oath.

When they came to Bill they would ask his age and he'd tell the truth: sixteen. And someone would say: "Hell, kid. You're too young. You can't enlist in the Army at sixteen." And Bill would pretend to be surprised and would say: "No? I didn't know that." And then someone would say: "Well, you go on home now and come back next year." And Bill would leave.

He did that three times. Then he quit. It bored him.

## 1918

IT WAS a Saturday afternoon and it was clear and cold out. He sat in Johnny Horgan's house over near Queen Lane Reservoir and the drinks were coming nice and evenly. Johnny had money and a Hudson. He did a lot of talking that afternoon. So did Cub Finella, a dark, handsome, hard character who loved fast motorcycles and girls to match. Cub was lucky. His family paid him to stay away.

And then there was Jim Farmer, who liked nothing better than to take his time getting drunk and telling stories. Sam Rodney, the fifth character, looked like a coat on a hanger and was just about as animate. Cub told about a couple of pushovers he had pushed over lately and which ones were talented and which ones were physically impoverished and what in particular made a certain right breast better than any left one he had ever seen.

Johnny was getting excited.

"Well," he asked belligerently, "what the hell are we sitting here for? Cub, you seem to know all about these dames on Cal-

lowhill Street. Why don't you take us down there and we'll test out a little of that stuff you're talking about?"

Cub held up a staying hand.

"Listen, I've got to be careful who I bring down there. Hell, Johnny, you gotta be careful how you act in these places."

Johnny looked over at Bill.

"What do you say, Whitey? Don't you think we ought to go down there?"

Bill didn't feel any more like going down to Callowhill Street than he felt like standing atop the statue of William Penn in ballet slippers.

"Sure," he said. "Sure. That suits me."

Bill needed a few more drinks. He got them. He remembered all the times he had bragged about the "women" he had had. And now he wondered what he'd do when one came to him. They all got into the car. Johnny drove and Cub sat up front with him because he had to direct the proceedings.

"Now I've got a reputation down here," Cub kept saying. "I can't take any chances with you guys. You gotta promise to behave yourselves, understand?" Everybody said sure thing. Sam and Jim Farmer asked if they had books on etiquette in whorehouses and Bill sat and worried.

"What do you do, Cub? Go right upstairs with the girl?"

"Christ, no! You sit around and have a few drinks and chat. Aw, what the hell do I have to tell you fellows this for? Just you watch me. That's all. You'll see what to do. Now remember." The car was drawing up to the curb. "No monkey business. I'm known all over this street."

It was getting dark when they walked up the brownstone steps. Johnny was asking loudly which house this was and how many girls it had and were they old and Cub kept screaming: "Shhhh! Quiet!" He rang the bell and after a moment the madam opened the door. She was fat and red-faced and was corseted so tightly that her tongue was lolling. She squinted suspiciously and finally she croaked hoarsely: "Well, well! If it ain't Cub! Come on in, Cub!"

He walked in, swaggering a little like a small depositor to whom the bank president has just nodded, and he said: "I brought you down a nice bunch of fellows. All nice guys. You don't have to worry about these guys."

She led the way through doors with chased glass panels, past an umbrella stand, and into a great back room where there was a large rectangular table and several girls sitting around staring to see who was coming in.

"I'm just putting up a little sauerkraut and frankfurters for my girls. Won't you jern us?"

Bill saw that the girls were younger and more attractive than he had supposed. They stared frankly from one boy to the other. He sat down, grinning to hide his complete lack of nerve, and he saw that there was a big cut-glass bowl with sauerkraut and a platter with plenty of frankfurters. The madam also had liquor, beer, and rice pudding. The boys did a little bit of eating. The girls did more. The madam talked huskily about the new drapes she had just hung and how they had cost her a young fortune. When she smiled she showed three gold teeth.

Drinks were served and the boys kept watching Cub. Soon he grabbed a girl and pulled her over onto his lap and began burying his face into the side of her neck. She squealed and other girls got up and sat on the laps of the other fellows and a little redhead plumped down on Bill's lap. She squirmed and achieved no intelligence.

Then there were more drinks. Bill was fascinated watching the others and he didn't talk to his girl at all. He wondered what it would really be like to go upstairs with a girl but he didn't know how to impress a girl like this so he kept grinning and drinking and watching Cub. Cub was on exhibition. He kept reaching around to the front of the girl's dress and squeezing so hard that parts of her breast squeezed through his fingers, and he kept slapping her thighs and clutching chunks of them and growling across the table: "How do you like that, Wis? Pretty nice stuff, huh, Wis?" Bill turned to his redhead and asked the worst questions a novice can ask such a girl: "How long have

you been here? How did you get into this business? A nice girl like you ought to be able to get something better."

The madam kept croaking about her new drapes though no one wanted to listen; she kept roaring like a bull and she began to sweat. Johnny Horgan glared down the table and yelled:

"You look like Fatty Arbuckle to me!"

"You're all pretty nice guys," she snarled. "But I can't say that I like that dopey bastard down there!" nodding at Johnny.

"Same to you, you big tub of lard!"

Bill got so excited that he burned a hole in the madam's new tablecloth. The room was tense. Cub was straining to save the situation.

"Which one you taking upstairs, Wis?"

"Why," said the madam, "you ought to have better manners than to burn my brand-new tablecloth."

"I'm very sorry," said Bill.

"Sorry ain't enough."

Cub and Sam took their girls and went upstairs. Everyone watched them go. And then no one said anything for a while and the redhead got up and filled drinks. Then everyone sipped and looked at everybody else and the madam whined plaintively: "Ain't you boys going upstairs and get put?"

Bill jumped up. He reached over to the cut-glass bowl and picked up a fistful of sauerkraut and flung it right into the madam's gold teeth. She gasped and strings of it hung off her nose and cheeks and he shouted:

"I don't like you and I don't like your place!"

Jim Farmer got up and hollered:

"I don't like her goddam drapes either!" He braced one foot against the wall and started yanking with both hands. The madam and the girls screamed and the drapes came down. Jim walked on them and went to the next window and did the same thing and then he began ripping them with his hands and stomping on them.

The madam ran out through the hall to the front stoop. Bill and Jim ran after her, grabbing their coats and hats in the hall

and brushing by her on the steps as she croaked: "Help! Police!" Then in an aside: "You sons of bitches! You'll pay for this!" Then: "Help! Police!"

They got into Johnny's car and Johnny came running out and hopped in. The car had one of those three-feet-tall starters and Johnny had a job trying to press down on it. The madam was screaming loud enough to be heard across the Delaware and at last the motor turned over and the three boys sped up Callowhill Street in a big cloud of smoke.

As they got to the corner they turned to take a last look and saw Cub and Sam come out onto the stoop, buttoning their trousers and yelling: "Wait for us!" They laughed so hard that Johnny could barely see where he was going.

The three stopped in Trainer's and had mass hysterics. They couldn't stop laughing and Johnny had tears in his eyes and their sides hurt. Then they looked up and saw Cub and Sam coming in grimly. Cub walked up angrily and wagged his finger under their noses.

"You guys may not realize this yet," he said ominously, "but you have just blackballed yourselves out of every whorehouse in Philadelphia!"

## 1918

JUNE CAME IN hot. Bill did his bit working nights at the Midvale Steel Company. It wasn't enough. There was no uniform. All the fellows he knew were soldiers or sailors or marines and all the girls were nurses. There was no glamor in a steel mill.

He was seventeen. He wanted a uniform badly. Wanted it as badly as he once wanted that fifty-dollar bike. He didn't want to do any bleeding or dying. Or, for that matter, drilling. But he had to have that uniform.

Elizabeth's husband, Jack, came to the rescue this time. He showed Bill a picture of a smiling cadet of the Royal Air Force. The picture had been taken in Toronto. The tunic was fine olive drab and the breeches were pale whipcord. The cadet carried a

swagger stick under his arm and his overseas cap had a broad white stripe running around it. Jack said that the RAF had lowered the age limit to seventeen years and six months. In fact his father had contacted Ned King, an old Harvard schoolmate, and found out that Ned had achieved a reputation in Toronto for getting American boys into the RAF.

Jack's father arranged the details. He wrote to Mr. King and King sent back a paper to be signed by Bill's father. "Please have him bring three letters of recommendation," the note said. Well, the letters were easy to get. But the signature of Charles Wister could not be bought or wheedled.

Bill begged and argued. His father wouldn't sign. The boy worked on his mother. She wasn't difficult. Then he persuaded her to work on Father. He spread the news around Philadelphia that he was thinking seriously of joining the RAF. There was a certain air of gay snobbishness about the RAF which could not be found in the American Army or Navy. He pestered his father until the man became angry. "You're too young, son. You should be at school."

A few times Mother and Bill had him to the point where he picked up the pen and looked at the paper. Then he'd slam the pen down and say: "No! I just won't do it!"

Of course he signed. It took time and bickering, but he signed and Bill got the three letters and one evening in July he had dinner at the Broad Street station with his mother and dad and Red Taylor and he got on the train for Canada. His mother was bright and almost birdlike in her gaiety and his father was glum and silent. Red grasped Bill's hand and said: "So long, Bill. Good hunting!" and the volunteer was off.

The next morning at eleven-thirty he met Ned King in his Toronto office. He was a husky man, balding and with a slight lisp. He used two canes because he was partially paralyzed. He told Bill, with some pride, about "Ned King and his cubs." Toronto had affectionately stuck that title on him because he had arranged for six Americans of good families to join the RAF. Bill was the seventh. He told Bill that he had a nice big house

in Toronto and that he was keeping it open for "you boys." He said that every Sunday he and his cubs had dinner, sometimes at the King home and sometimes at the King Edward Hotel.

Bill liked Mr. King. And thereafter he had dinner with him every Sunday. When King and his cubs crossed a sidewalk to reach an automobile the others walked ahead. But not Bill. He stayed behind to help his benefactor.

On that first day Mr. King sent Bill to the recruiting station. They gave him several tests, including the spinning chair, and they marked him and thirty-five others for pilot training and then marched them through the streets of Toronto. The rain was coming down hard and cold and Bill could see the stiff brim of his straw hat sagging like the eaves on an old farm porch.

The next morning he got his uniform. It wasn't exactly the dashing one of the photograph. It was G.I. The other one could be bought privately and worn only on leave. Bill was going to buy one. At ten that morning he went down to the cadet latrine and sat in a mockery of privacy. He heard a gurgling sound from the next stall and it annoyed him. It was as though someone was trying to whisper a cough.

He got up and looked. The cadet in the next stall had slashed his throat from ear to ear and a pulsing fountain of dark blood was arching out across the floor. As he watched, the cadet's head bowed slightly forward and he looked almost comical sitting on the toilet doing his dying in a place like that. Cadets began to run and yell and bump into each other. The throttled pulsing of blood now stained the front of the cadet's uniform and spread out and reached his legs and then curved off onto the white outer side of the bowl and down onto the floor.

That was in the Jessie Ketchum Barracks. Bill wasn't there long enough to find out who the cadet was or why he had chosen such a ridiculous exit. He was sent to the big camp at Long Branch on Lake Ontario. There he drilled and drilled and drilled. The men who drilled the cadets were jealous British sergeants who knew that all the boys would soon outrank them

as "leftenants" and they were as bluntly callous as they could be. Bill hated all of it.

There was a wireless course, which he studied as far as the letter *d*. The rest of the class was up to *z*, so he took to peeking over the next student's shoulder and thus achieved a passing grade. Then he was assigned to guard duty outside the military hospital for venereals. It left a scar on his sex life. The lecturers made it worse.

"Every prostitute in this part of Canada is now in Toronto," they'd warn. "If you have any sexual contact at all you must report to the prophylactic station immediately on return to camp. If you don't, and you contract an infection, you will lose your commission."

Bill had little desire to make love to such girls anyway. It was different with "decent" girls; he admired them. He worshiped them. He liked to display them on his arm as private property. But that was the end of the line.

He enjoyed his little furloughs at the King Edward. Ontario was dry, but bootleggers were running pretty good stuff up from Buffalo. He arranged for bootleggers to phone him as he strolled through the lobby so that bellhops would holler: "Cad-et Wister! Cad-et Wister!"

He went to Beauchamp and Howe for that tailored uniform. It cost a hundred and twenty dollars. The short, chinchilla-type officer's overcoat cost a hundred, and that was quite a sum because the coat was stolen four days later.

Bill drank with cadets and flying officers. But he seldom got drunk and he accumulated a lot of stories about pilots buzzing Canadian Pacific trains, and scaring the hell out of cows, and flying upside down, and trying to fly close enough to telegraph wires to make them sing.

Later he told these things as having happened to him.

The popular song was "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows."

A letter came from his mother. She wrote: "An epidemic of illness has reached Philadelphia. It is called Spanish influenza." Bill told some of the other cadets about it. No one had ever

heard of it. Someone said it probably had something to do with sneezing.

He bought a swagger stick to go with his uniform. It was carried along the inside tips of the fingers of the right hand. When an officer approached it was correct to swing the stick smartly under the left arm, then raise the right hand in the palm-out, side-of-the-head British salute, the while turning the eyes to the side the officer had chosen to pass, then bring the saluting hand down, swing eyes front, and pluck the swagger stick back to the finger tips of the right hand. This could be annoying. King Street was filthy with officers.

One morning the cadets were drilling and the sergeants were shouting sarcasm and men began to fall on their faces on the parade ground. First-aid units came running with stretchers and carried them away. No one seemed to know what the trouble was. Certainly the drilling was no tougher than on other days.

From day to day more were carried off until all the hospitals were filled and cots were placed in the corridors. Then the real dread of Spanish influenza seeped through the camp and boys worried and stared at each other and waited for the sickening weakness that comes first. Bill was one of the last to be hit. His face burned and he felt the weakness. When he reported sick he had to stand in sick line for two hours in a soaking rain. Then they gave him his duffel bag and a ticket of admittance to the hospital. He reached there with another man and everyone seemed to be busy ministering to the dying, so he fell down on the concrete floor and slept.

Then a nurse came and helped him up and onto the grounds into a tent. It was cold. He became delirious and ran outside in his pajamas. The nurses coaxed him back. Five days later he began to rally. He lay on his back staring at the tan top of the tent. He heard the boy in the cot across the way dictating a letter to a nurse. Bill didn't want to listen. But the cadet's voice was so tired and high and girlish that he was impelled to listen. It was to his mother in St. Louis.

"I am telling this to a nurse, Mother dear. She is writing it for

me. There is something I've wanted you to know, but I haven't had the nerve to say it before. You have been a wonderful mother to me and I know now that I didn't appreciate you when I was home, but I'm due for a leave as soon as I get well and I'm coming home and I'm going to really show you, Mom, how much you mean to me. I just hope you will forget all the times I didn't show the proper appreciation, because a fellow has to be away and sick before he realizes these things.

"They tell me that I'll be all right in another week or ten days and I lay here dreaming of the fun you and I are going to have. I'm convinced that you're the only girl for me. I'll send a wire before I arrive."

He didn't. The Canadian Government did. It began: "We regret to inform you . . ."

Later Bill was transferred to a greenhouse with other convalescents. Through the glass he could see the mortuary and he used to bet the other cadets that he could come closer than they to guessing the number of trips the hearse made each day. It was always somewhere near fifty.

When he became well enough to walk he was given a ten-day furlough home. The train got him into New York the morning of November eighth. It was the day of the fake armistice and he looked bewilderedly out of the train window. People were screaming, hugging, dancing, singing off key, wearing smiles that nothing could kill. Men were drunk who perhaps had never been drunk before. There were tremendous headlines, confetti, one old lady who kept clasping and unclasping her hands and weeping, and kids in bands scrambling for coins thrown to them by men.

When he got home his sister and mother were sitting around the house with gauze masks. They said it had been awful in Philadelphia. Priests had helped to dig graves. Funerals couldn't be scheduled because no undertaker could be found to take the bodies. Doctors and nurses in hospitals had dropped almost as frequently as patients.

There was a wire from Canada. It said that his leave had been canceled and to return at once. Elizabeth was expecting another

Geary. Bill got a few hours' sleep in his old bed and started back. Broad Street was musty with death and pale of face, but it shouted hoarsely and happily over the false armistice and it was having one hell of a time.

In New York Bill was delayed two days by order and then boarded the Empire State Express and headed north again. At Albany he heard about the real Armistice. This was it, and the canteen girls swarmed aboard the train and hugged soldiers and staged impromptu dances in the car vestibules. At Syracuse there was bedlam, so that it hurt his ears, and he met an old British Army sergeant and the mob grabbed both of them and hoisted them on a sea of shoulders and paraded and danced and sang. Somewhere in all the din a little girl was singing "Till We Meet Again." Bill could only catch shrill phrases of it.

The sergeant had a bottle, which he shared. At Buffalo, Bill changed trains and met about twenty-five cadets whose leaves had been canceled and who jammed the dining car. At the end table sat a British industrialist. He was drinking and buying drinks for the car stewards and the waiters and they were all pretty drunk. He ordered the waiters to serve "anything" to the cadets but not to take money from them.

The drinks came too fast and the train seemed to lean too far over on the curves. A prim old lady came in for dinner and the waiter was so drunk that he pulled the chair away from her instead of pushing it toward her and she fell and became very indignant and left the car in a huff. The train was crawling into Sunnyside yards near Toronto when Bill's world began to grow dim. He vaguely remembered the waiters dropping trays of food and falling on their faces in the car. But he didn't remember the cadets taking him off the train in a wheelchair. His right hand was hanging over the side and it kept catching in the spokes. He woke up on a couch in Ned King's house.

Three hours later he discovered that Canada had gone utterly mad and he went to the King Edward. He felt good again. The lobby was jammed. He went into the grill and met two officers and their girls. They were cordially drunk and one of the officers

placed his clasped hands on the tablecloth, put his head on them, and passed out.

Bill danced with the passed-out officer's girl and the foursome went upstairs to the other officer's room and they all took their clothes off and danced around nude. Then the girls put on the RAF uniforms and the men put the dresses on.

They all went back downstairs to the grill and danced and people laughed uproariously and pointed. Then an M.P. tapped Bill and the officer and asked their names and serial numbers. Bill gave it and got his uniform back and took a cab out to Long Branch.

When he had slept it off he was told that the charges were serious: absent without leave, and disgracing His Majesty's uniform. It looked bad. He worried greatly and was sure that the least he would get would be a term in prison. The trial was simple. He had to stand outside the courtroom while it was being conducted and then a non-com came to the door and stood three feet away and roared: "Wister!" Bill went in and was found guilty and the court postponed sentence.

Before Christmas he was home on a temporary leave. He had never piloted a plane, shot a gun in anger, saved a life, or helped to prosecute the war. But he returned to Philadelphia a modest hero.

## 1919

THIS WAS the life. It couldn't have been better. Philadelphia was full of uniforms. Soldiers and sailors and marines and coast guardsmen were everywhere. The city considered it a patriotic privilege to lionize every one of them. And then Bill came along with a uniform that was different. It stood out so much that bewildered American officers saluted him because they weren't sure of his rank, and crowds collected every time he paused at a street corner.

Strange men walked up to him and asked him to please come to their homes for dinner. At the Ritz bar the patrons parted si-

lently when he came in to give him front-rank room and the bartenders scorned his money and told him that he could have anything he wanted.

Aunt Agnes told him that he was a dead ringer for the Prince of Wales. He scoffed at the idea—but could see a resemblance himself. There were parties every night, and sometimes two and three a night. Debs and postdebs fought over him. He drank a lot but it was all controlled drinking and there was no impulse to get falling-down drunk.

At parties he remembered his manners and waited his turn on the stag line and pressed the hand of the hostess and told her how happy he was that she had asked him to come. Then he danced once with the daughter of the hostess. Then he shopped around among the faces and figures until he located the most beautiful one. He never brought a girl. That would have committed him for the evening. He preferred free-lancing.

When he was at the Bellevue-Stratford he often asked the Chosen One to come across the street to the Ritz bar for a drink. If it was raining he'd hail a cab to make a single U turn to the Ritz across the street. That was so her slippers wouldn't get wet.

At the bar patrons would glance admiringly at him and the girl and he often got invitations to join people at their tables. He seldom got home to Oak Road to say hello to the folks. When he did get there it was only to get more money.

Old Ben Wagner, the Ritz barfly, had a stiff middle finger which could not be curled around a drink. He watched Bill's comings and goings through eyes that had been rye-glazed for forty years. One night he spoke.

"You're young, kid. You'd better watch out. Don't let that stuff get you. Look what it's done to me."

Bill said that the man was obviously crazy.

## 1919

IT WAS April and the trees were showing off outrageously and "The Velvet Lady" was playing at the Forrest and the pa-

pers were full of a Navy plane called the NC-4 which would attempt to fly the Atlantic and the Red Sox began to think they really had something in a southpaw pitcher named Babe Ruth, but none of these except "The Velvet Lady" was important to Bill and he spent much time down front at the Forrest Theatre.

Her name was Gladys Warder and she was a picture-hat brown-eyed beauty. She had eyelashes as big as snow shovels and a smile as full of meaning as price tags on a bridegroom's pajamas six months after the wedding. Bill had found two new friends. Both drank more than somewhat.

Frank Germain was one. His mother and father had died and left him twenty thousand dollars a year. He had a passion for chorus girls. Then there was Jerry Coons, a vicious kid from the wrong side of the tracks. The three of them saw "The Velvet Lady" twenty-one times. The ritual was the same each time: to the Ritz bar for early drinks; then phone Conway's Theater Ticket Agency for seats; then sit there and gleefully watch the girls come on stage and watch the chorus girls nudge each other when they spotted Germain, Coons, and Wister. In the number where they carried baskets of posies and threw them, the boys always got more than their share.

Frank had charge-account coins for all the better stores. He was crazy about one of the girls in the show and he gave her one of the coins. He never got beyond the lip-pecking stage, but she charged up a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of stockings and lingerie to him.

Bill dated Gladys Warder quite often. But always for lunch and only to be seen with her at the Bellevue-Stratford. In uniform, of course.

## 1919

IT WAS in late spring that love came to William Wynne Wister. It was on the morning of a blustery May day and he stood at the corner of Broad and Walnut, chatting vigorously about nothing at all with Dot Lynn and Bob South. A big black

Packard with wire wheels screeched around the corner and stopped. A girl was driving. She had brown hair and big dark eyes and the most attractive mouth he had ever seen. For the first time in his life he actually wanted a girl, not for display but to still the pulsing excitement he felt. He was introduced. Her name was Eileen Mason. She told him that her father had given her the car as a present and Bill said it was the most beautiful automobile he had ever seen and she said that she was simply mad about his uniform and she wanted to know all about his war experiences, and they closed the discussion by driving out to Merion for lunch.

Her parents had a big home there. It had been closed all winter and there were sheets over the furniture. There was a gigantic barn in the back and some small cottages on the property. He got to know Eileen better. She smoked cigarettes and blew the smoke out in thin, forceful streams. Her father was a small fat man who had a cellarful of liquor. He drank all the time and liked to get out of bed at five in the morning and mix cocktails. But he didn't like his family or anyone else to drink on his property.

Bill became jealous of Eileen. He had a conference with Dot Lynn and learned all he could about the class of competition he might expect. About three weeks after meeting her he and Dot and Bob drove Eileen up to Princeton, where she had a prom date. Dot and Bob sat in front. Bill and Eileen cuddled in back.

"I don't like you going up here to dance with someone else."

"Oh, Bill! I don't either. I've told you that. But the date was made so long ago."

"Do you keep all the dates you make?"

"Isn't Bob driving too fast?"

"I won't play second fiddle to any fellow. I mean that, Eileen."

"I know. And I'd rather be with you. You know that."

"Well, I just wanted you to get it straight. I don't like this."

He took her to Princeton and waited until she sneaked out, long before the dance was over, and they made love in an almost proper way, and he took her home, proud that she had proved

that he was first in her affections. He sent flowers and gave her a compact with his name etched on the cover in gold in his own handwriting, so that, no matter where she was, the name of Wister would have to come to mind every time she powdered her nose. Then he talked her into an unannounced engagement.

That was in June. On the first of July prohibition became a fact and Philadelphia became riotously drunk as the hours ticked it closer. It meant the death of the Ritz bar crowd, and everyone was at the wake. When midnight came some of the men leaped across the bar and grabbed bottles of whisky and the bartenders fought them and someone called the police.

It was so cumulatively depressing that Bill took off his uniform and donned civilian clothes. He would have worn the uniform forever, but people were now making pointed remarks. It was the sackcloth and ashes of an era.

His father criticized him for not finding a job and asked him to take a job with an insurance firm. Bill didn't like the business. It made no difference that five generations of Wisters had graced the rosters of Philadelphia insurance firms. However, the more he thought of Eileen, the more he thought of marriage. And the more he thought of marriage, the more he thought of a job and money.

So he took a job as clerk with Curtis and Watson at the corner of Fourth and Walnut streets, and old man Watson, the office manager, promised to teach him the business from the ground up. That meant eighteen dollars a week and checking up on fire-insurance ratings. It was all right for three weeks. Then the novelty wore off and the hours at Curtis and Watson became painful.

Bill was popular with the insurance crowd. He became the office clown, always good for laughs. He said he wanted to get out of the fire end of the business and into the marine section. But nothing happened, and he got into the habit of watching the clock longingly. When it reached five he grabbed his hat and rushed over to a speakeasy, had a few cocktails, and then hurried out to see Eileen in Merion.

Bill spent many of his nights on the Mason sleeping porch,

though Mr. Mason didn't like him and said so. The old man got in the habit of arising at dawn and hunting squirrels with a double-barreled shotgun near where Bill slept.

One morning Mr. Mason got a ladder and climbed into one of his fruit trees to see how next winter's brandy was coming along. The ladder broke and he fell. Two days later he died.

Mrs. Mason was tall and stately and had snowy hair. She was in perfect control of herself at the time of the sudden death of her husband and remained calm when the lawyers opened the will and told her that he had run through most of his money and that she was going to have to get along on a rather small income. She sold the big twin-six Packard, fired servants and a chauffeur, permitted Eileen to keep her small Packard.

One rainy night in the fall Bill drove with Eileen to a dance at the Merion Cricket Club. She wore a pale green evening gown, Bill wore a dinner jacket. The guests at dinner were getting in the habit of bringing their own liquor. Bill watched them drinking. After dinner he danced with Eileen but he was restless. He introduced her to a few friends and then excused himself. Upstairs he found three things: friends, liquor, and a crap game. He enjoyed all three for the next three hours and then went downstairs drunk, and richer by two hundred and forty dollars.

"Where were you?" Eileen said. "You had a devil of a nerve!"

"Oh, don't be angry. Just met some people. Couldn't break away."

They got into her car. It was still raining. He started the car, slammed the gear shift in, and raced down the road. It was black and the rain was heavy and seemed to float up to the headlights.

"Listen, Bill. If this ever happens again you and I are through."

"Nobody is going to tell me what to do."

"Nobody is trying to. I want to be treated with some respect."

"You get too much respect from me."

The car approached Conastoga Hill. It was going fast. So was the argument.

"Listen, Bill. You may think you're a big shot but I don't. I don't have to stand for your bad manners."

His brain was heavy-footed with liquor. All he could say was: "Oh yeah?"

Then he pressed his foot on the accelerator, jammed it to the floor, and held it there. The car was going downhill and it leaped out, writhing and twisting. Eileen screamed. Bill watched her and reveled in her hysteria. The road was crowned and down around the curve at the bottom a car started up toward them. The driver did his best. He got over as far as he could, but it wasn't far enough.

There was a violent jolt as the front left wheel of the Packard tore into the left rear wheel of the other car. The Packard swerved and headed for a big telegraph pole. It was festooned with sagging cables. Eileen made one last effort. She swung the wheel. The Packard missed the pole and the top was torn off by a cable. The rest of the car went over the edge of the curve headfirst and down, down into a deep culvert. There was a sound as though someone had slammed an iron door. Then dark silence and the hiss of rain on macadam.

Bill came to. He sloshed dazedly through calf-deep mud. He kept mumbling: "Eileen! Eileen?" There was no answer. Then he saw a collection of cars stopping overhead and someone yelled down: "Anybody hurt?" He mumbled: "I can't find my girl," and staggered on through the mud.

The car was standing on its nose. Eileen wasn't inside, but he found a pale green evening slipper beside the running board. He shook violently and looked up, frightened, into the night rain and yelled: "Now, by God, you *have* done it!" He got on his hands and knees in the mud and looked under the car. He was sure she was there. But he couldn't find her. Now more cars were stopping overhead, their lights beamed out over the top of the wreck below. He wandered until he found her. She was lying unconscious, face down in the mud, off to the right of the car. He talked to her, begging her to live, and tried to lift her and carry her up to safety. Then he felt wet and he dropped her again. He put

his hand inside the left side of his chest; it came out dripping with blood. He began frantically to paw his body and found two big slivers of glass in his back and long gashes on his face and neck.

Men came down the embankment carefully and picked up both victims. A Mr. Baldwin sent his chauffeur and station wagon from a place near by and they were taken to a doctor's office in Wayne. He examined Eileen first and found no injuries. The mud had saved her. He stitched Bill's face and neck and back and put dressings on. They were driven to Eileen's house in Merion. He tried to tell her what a fool he had been. She waved it away.

"That's all right. The car was insured. I'm just sorry—oh God, I don't know!" and she began to cry.

In the morning his body creaked with aches. It was Sunday and when he was driven home to his folks they were coming down the walk to go to church.

"What happened, son?"

"Automobile accident."

"Are you hurt?"

"No. Not badly."

"Well," said his father, "is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, you can give me a quart of your Carstairs rye."

"You know where I keep it, son."

He limped inside and drank almost all of it and felt nothing.

After that he was sure that Eileen wouldn't see him. But she did. The old fervor was gone and it was like throwing an aspirin into a vase of dying flowers, but they continued to go through the motions of being in love. Bill began to drink seriously. And he began to pull his first blanks. He would pass out for four or five hours and then wake up without any idea in the world where he was or where he had been. He began to get a lot of effect on much less alcohol.

Eileen had a party in one of the cottages and Bill got very drunk and fell into everyone and took his shoes off and screamed for liquor and accused everyone of stealing his bottle. No one

was amused. When he sobered up in the morning he had a vague recollection that Eileen had shouted in the presence of all the guests that she was through with him. He wasn't sure it had happened, but his recollection seemed real.

Then she came to the sleeping porch and said she'd like to have a talk with him.

"Bill, I'm breaking our engagement."

"Oh, stop, Eileen."

"No. I mean it."

"What are you talking about? I feel sick."

"It's no use going on. I've warned you about drinking. You can't handle yourself at all and you don't show any consideration for me. I think it will be much better if we don't see each other any more. This is final, Bill."

Mrs. Mason had known it was coming.

"Aw, you wouldn't do this to me, Eileen." He was stunned. Then he became angry and hollered. Then he pleaded. He asked her to take her time and think it over. He promised not to drink, ever again.

"It's too late, Bill. I'm sorry."

He became depressed. Panicky. He worried about what other

people would say. He could hear it whispered all over town that Eileen had thrown him over. He could hear the giggles, see the smirks. He knew he couldn't face those people, so he went home. He needed sympathy, large hookers of it. And he got it from his mother. He slid into a deep depression. He was plagued with thoughts of other men making love to Eileen. Mrs. Wister was sure everything would be all right if Bill would be patient.

He sent flowers to Eileen, he phoned, but she wouldn't receive the flowers or answer the phone. He couldn't sleep because his mind was tortured with thoughts of what he had lost. He dreamed of cutting his wrists and had visions of Eileen rushing to him and moaning:

"Ooh, Bill! This was all a mistake. It was all my fault, darling. You've got to get well—for my sake, dear!"

He went to Merion, forced his way into the house, and had a

showdown argument with her in the great living room. That was the time Mrs. Mason came downstairs and ordered him off the premises. He couldn't understand why he felt so relieved.

"I'm certainly glad to get out of this mess! I'm a lucky guy!" he shouted over his shoulder as he left.

On that day drinking became a career.

1920

VELMA BROWN was a clerk at Curtis and Watson. She was something a clerk gave rate cards to. Bill had spoken to her many times, but one day he looked at her and was astonished to discover that she was also a female. She was short, dark, and had a moonface. Biologically, the rest of her was most interesting. She lived in West Philadelphia and Bill wondered why he had never noticed her before. At almost the same time he first noticed Velma he got to know Jack Bromley. Jack was a really fine boy. He was tall and gentle and altogether entertaining until he got intoxicated. Then he was rough and wild and a very bad young man. Young men who wear glasses should never try to steal girls from gangsters in speakeasies. Jack learned that the hard way.

Bill told Velma that he had bought a Ford roadster. She asked him if he ever drove down to the Jersey coast. He said he had been there but had never driven down. She said her folks had a place down there and that she went down every week end and also that she knew a girl named Molly who was going there. Bill thought that was fine. He said he had always liked the shore.

He got in touch with Jack. Jack was engaged to Emaline Darrow. They were going to be married that summer and it was a most important social event. Jack said he would love to spend a week end in a resort hotel and go on a date with some good-looking girl.

When the week end came they intended to start right off but they got tangled in the Riviera Café in Fairmount Park and had drinks and bought two bottles of whisky. The liquor tasted like

cologne. Bill wanted to drive his new Ford, but Jack wanted to use a new Dodge the family had just bought. They used the Dodge.

They drove down the Pike, nipping lightly at the bottles, feeling good, and then Jack hit two R.F.D. boxes and they laughed. They were going very fast and they got to the shore quickly. They took a room in the Hotel Gayle. Joe Bocci, a politician, owned it. It was a half block from the boardwalk.

They changed clothes in the room and had about ten drinks apiece. They began to think extremely highly of the town and the sea breezes and the flappers who strolled the boardwalk. At eight o'clock that evening Bill said he had to go and meet Velma. He was drunk, but he was under control. Jack said he would go to meet the other girl and bring her back and pick up Velma and Bill. It was going to be one of those dream week ends.

Bill met Velma and her parents. He wasn't very much impressed and neither were they. The girl was nervous. They waited an hour and then Bill said: "Oh, the hell with Jack. Let's go down to the Ocean Pavilion and dance."

Bill had a flask in his pocket. He kept excusing himself to go to the men's room, where he had more drinks. He danced with Velma and began to emit war whoops out on the floor. She reddened and wanted to leave. Bill was docile. He left with her and got out on the boardwalk and ordered a rolling chair. He was very loud and very rocky on his feet. He examined the Negro thoroughly.

"This man isn't strong enough," he bellowed. "I want two pushers."

He was getting drunker, mumblyingly drunker, and he was moaning that there was no Jack. Velma was upset and kept looking at him and wringing her hands. They were wheeled up and down until one in the morning. Then she insisted on going home and Bill said that he'd be happy to take her and drop her. She was becoming a wet blanket on a perfectly fine party.

He left her at her home and went to the Holiday Club. No Jack. He went to six more cafés, being careful in each case not

to offend by walking out without buying refreshments. At three-thirty he gave up the search and went back to the Gayle. Jack wasn't there and the bed hadn't been slept in.

He was still thinking vaguely about Jack when he awakened. It was eight in the morning and he had slept with his clothes on. The phone was ringing. He was sick and he could barely reach for the instrument.

"Hello?"

"Hello." It was a woman's voice and she was weeping. "This is Molly."

"Oh, hello, Molly. Where's Jack?"

"He's in jail." The wailing became louder.

"Jail! For Christ's sake, which jail? What happened?"

"The big one near the railroad station."

"Well, please, what happened?"

"We were driving along the main street to meet you. I think it was the main street. I don't know this town very well. We were driving along and something was wrong with the car and Jack stopped. He was looking under the hood and a motorcycle policeman was parked alongside and he said something fresh to Jack and Jack looked up and said, 'Why don't you go out and pinch some of these political crooks down here?' and the policeman got off his motorcycle and he felt the bulge under Jack's coat and he asked Jack if he ever heard of the Van Ness Act. I think it was the Van Ness Act. He asked Jack if he had ever heard of it and Jack said no, that he had never heard of the policeman either and the policeman said that anyone caught carrying liquor on his person in New Jersey was liable to a fine of one thousand dollars and one year in jail. And"—the sobbing became acute—"he took us both to jail. I got away, but poor Jack—"

Bill hung up. He had heard the details. The sobbing could be done alone. He got dressed and went out. It was hot, and he was sick and tense and afraid that he'd say something wrong and be put in the cell next to Jack. He walked to the police station and

there was a man with thick spectacles behind a window. Bill said:

"You got a fellow named Jack Bromley in here?"

There was no answer. The spectacled man was writing in a big ledger. He took two minutes to add up a column of figures. Bill licked his lips.

"Who?" the man said loudly.

"Jack Bromley, of Philadelphia."

The man squinted at Bill.

"I'll say we have. That son of a bitch is going to serve a long term. We have about twenty charges against him."

"May I ask, please, what the charges are?"

"You want to know the charges? Well, driving a car without a license, speeding, violating the Van Ness Act, insolence to an officer, assault and battery, arson—is that enough?"

Bill said nothing. He stared at the man.

"You got a lawyer for him? He's going to need one. You'd better go out and get one quick."

"Well, tell me. What did he do? I'm a friend of his."

"What did he do, is it? Well, I'll tell you what he did. He came in here with an officer and some bimbo. He got up in front of night court for a preliminary hearing. The judge held him in bail. Then your friend hauled off and smashed the bailiff in the mouth and started to run. Why he wasn't shot I'll never know. He started to run. He ran through the street door and fell right into the arms of a private detective. The detective collared him, and in the commotion the bimbo beat it. You'd better find out who she is and bring her here. She's going to get into a lot of trouble."

"Well, we threw your maniac friend into a cell and what happened? He found some papers and lit a fire. He tried to burn the jail down. And do you know where your friend is right now? In a padded cell, where he belongs."

"All right. If you don't mind I'd like to see Jack first and then go out and get a lawyer."

The man came out from behind his window.

"You'd better get a good one, son."

Bill knew that he and Jack had to get back to Philadelphia the following morning. Otherwise there was going to be a lot of trouble and Emaline would find out and so would a lot of other people.

The jailer opened the door of a padded cell and Jack stood staring at Bill.

"Jesus Christ! Get me out of here, Bill. This is terrible."

"Jack, I can't. I've got to get you a lawyer. How much money have you got?"

"Go as high as five hundred but get me out of here."

Bill was confused and frightened. He went back to the hotel. In the grill he ordered lobster and sat talking with Bocci, the manager.

"Sounds pretty serious," Bocci said. "Your friend needs a lawyer bad. I've got just the guy for you."

"Who?"

"Best in the world—Joseph Curry."

Bocci used a phone. Bill was still eating lobster when a little baldish man arrived with a brief case and plunked it down in a spare chair.

"How much money has your friend got?"

"He can go as high as five hundred."

"My fee will be seven hundred. Cash."

Bill tried to say something. The little man didn't listen.

"This will take about two days. We'll have to post bond. We can use the car for bail."

"He has no license."

"Makes no difference. Now the best thing we can do is go down to the jail and get Jack and bring him up here for a talk."

"Why, you won't even be able to get *in* the jail to see him. They're out to give him the works for hitting the cop and setting fire to the prison."

Curry smiled patiently. They got into his big car and drove up to the jail and walked inside. There were eight police officers there. They took one look at Mr. Curry.

"Hello, Joe!" "Well, well, if it ain't Joe!" "How's every little thing, Joe?" "Did you get that stuff all right, Joe? You know what I mean—what the boss sent?" "When you're through, Joe, I want to ask a favor."

Joe went over to a desk, signed some papers, whispered with an officer, walked into the cell block, got a check for seven hundred dollars from Jack, and then led the culprit out into the sunlight. He stopped once to talk to the private detective who had stopped Jack on his bid for freedom.

Driving back to the hotel, he told Jack that there would be two trials, one by the city, one by the state for violation of the Van Ness Act.

"Now everything is set," he said. "The fine will be fifty dollars on the assault and battery and the smaller charges. It will be twenty-five on the Van Ness Act. We'll plead to a lesser charge on that. The policeman you hit will get fifty. The cop who arrested you will get twenty-five. And a hundred to the court officer will keep it out of the papers. Fifty more will cover incidentals. The arson charge will be dropped altogether. Is that all right?"

Jack nodded numbly. He hadn't realized that back talk to one policeman could be so expensive. Curry dropped them off at the corner.

"Now I want you fellows to be in court at eleven in the morning. Whatever you do, don't be late. And don't get drunk tonight."

They went back to the hotel and started to drink. They had five. Then Jack began to pound the dresser top with his fist, slowly and rhythmically. His eyes began to redden like men's sometimes do when they are angry enough to cry.

"These lousy sons of bitches! The lousy bastards! That cop was just sitting there waiting for me. This is the lousiest deal——"

Bill talked him quiet. With dinner they had more drinks. Later they fell into bed drunk. At ten they awakened. They were sick.

At eleven they sat in court. Meanwhile Bill had phoned Jack's cousin Mickey Bonn in Philadelphia and told him to explain to Emaline that Jack had been in a little fracas at the shore and

wouldn't be able to meet her that morning, but not to worry, that everything was all right. Case after case was called before Judge Angelo and there was no sign of Curry.

"I knew it, I knew it," Jack moaned. "That son of a bitch isn't going to show."

At eleven-thirty Curry came in, cool in a Palm Beach suit. He barely nodded to the boys. He continued right on up the aisle and leaned his chin on his arms on the rostrum and whispered. The judge bent low to listen and nodded. Then Curry came back and said that the fine would be fifty dollars. The case was called and Jack walked up white and scared and the judge beamed benevolently and said:

"I guess you were quite a bit excited. You're an excitable person, aren't you?" Jack didn't know what to say, but he took a chance and nodded and the judge said: "How do you plead to all these charges?" Jack looked around and Curry said, "Nolo contendere. Non vult." The judge smiled as though he had just been euchered and said:

"Oh well. In that case I guess I can fine you only fifty dollars."

They paid and left. That night they got fairly drunk. On Tuesday morning they sat in state court and Mickey Bonn walked in. He sat beside Jack and Bill and whispered:

"Everything is all fixed up."

"Yeah. Yeah," said Jack.

"I fixed it."

"You fixed what?"

"The newspapers and everything."

"*You* did? What are you talking about? The lawyer fixed that up."

"Well, I went around to the newspapers and paid off the proper people. And I went to the jail and you know those detectives? I slipped every last one of them a twenty apiece."

"Good God, man! They've all been taken care of."

"Yeah? Well, all I can say is that it's going to cost you a pretty penny for what I did."

Jack turned to Bill.

"The fare," he said, "is going up."

Curry came in. He whispered with the judge. The case was called. The fine was twenty-five dollars. Jack paid. Then they thanked Curry and left and went to the boardwalk. They bought a paper and of course there it was: SCION OF PHILADELPHIA FAMILY HAD HIP TROUBLE.

Emaline was saintly. She laughed and married Jack on schedule.

## 1921

THE INSURANCE BUSINESS became disagreeable in all its aspects. Bill began to spend fifty dollars a week on a twenty-two-dollar income. He didn't pay anything at home and he charged all his clothes to his father. His mother used to say:

"Now go up to Read's and get yourself a good suit and a decent pair of shoes."

"Oh, Mother. I can't do that."

"Go ahead."

And he did. He always did.

He saw Jack now and then, but his main interest was Charlie Johnson. Charlie was slender and dark and had a fine sense of humor and a great sense of propriety. He liked to drink, but he knew when to stop. He loved having fun with the boys and he liked his job. He had come of poor people and had worked his way up to a spot where he was head of the real estate department of a bank. Bill found that, besides all these qualities, Charlie Johnson had a great sense of loyalty.

Charlie and Bill were invited to be ushers at Thayer Bretton's wedding to Edith Moshur. Edith was small, dark, and skinny, and had a lush mouth. Thayer was chubby and had dimples and jet hair and was a drunk. The wedding was to be held at the Little Church Around the Corner in New York.

The wedding was held at high noon. There were ten bridesmaids and the church was resplendent with flowers and gay ribbons. Father Moshur was running around in tails with a car-

nation in his lapel. The sunlight came purple through the stained-glass windows and dyed the pews and the floor. The organ was playing slow filler music. Bill wore a cutaway and had a carnation too. He didn't fumble when it came to seating the guests. The wedding ceremony itself was mercifully short.

The reception was held at the Ritz-Carlton. There was champagne and food and laughter and bride-kissing and old remembrances and wishes of everlasting happiness and formal toasts and informal toasts and funny toasts and drinking without toasts. Bill enjoyed himself. At four he left with Charlie. They went back to the Algonquin and changed their clothes and sat around and had a few drinks. Then they went to a speakeasy on Sixth Avenue. Bill was laden with the proper cards.

They had more drinks. Later they went to the Ted Lewis Club, where they picked up two girls and had a whale of a time. Then Bill excused himself and staggered off in the direction of the men's room.

He awakened at noon. He looked around and knew that he had never seen this room before. He didn't know where he was or how he had gotten there. He was nervous and frightened again. He picked up the phone.

"Room clerk. . . . Hello, room clerk? What day is this? . . . Hah? . . . Sure I mean it. . . . Oh, Sunday. What time is it? . . . Twelve. Thanks. Listen, is everything in order? . . . What? . . . No. I mean, how did I get here? Was I all right? . . . I see. Fine . . . Sure. Sure. I drew a blank . . . Yeah. I'll say. Well, thanks. As long as everything is all right that's all I wanted to know. Listen. Will you ask the operator to get the Algonquin for me? . . . The Algonquin. Yeah. Thanks a lot."

He got Charlie.

"You're a nice guy," Charlie said. "What's the idea of dropping us at the Ted Lewis Club? Florence is fit to be tied. . . . What? She's the girl you had last night. . . . Hah? . . . Oh, pretty nice. A little too flat for me. Where the hell are you now? . . . All right. Come on over. I'll be waiting."

Bill went back to the Algonquin and all was forgiven. Charlie

ordered ham and eggs and french fries and coffee. The thought of those things made Bill sick. He couldn't stand the odor of food. Charlie couldn't stand the smell of liquor, even from a stale glass.

While Charlie ate Bill had a few. The reaction was immediate. The tenseness dropped from him and he was able to laugh and joke and see something funny in drawing a blank and ditching the party.

"You ought to lay off that stuff, Bill. It's morning. The party is over. What you need is food."

"Look." Bill laughed. "Every man to his own poison."

They got dressed and went down to Greenwich Village. Charlie knew where there was a party going on. It was Sunday afternoon and the streets of New York were quiet, the air clear of smoke. They walked into an apartment. The shades were drawn and the floor lamps were lighted. There were eight or ten couples in the living room, almost all reclining on couches or on the floor. A man with feverish dark eyes was discussing Maxwell Bodenheim.

Someone pressed drinks into their hands. They were pink, made of bathtub gin and grenadine. One man was unconscious in the center of the floor and the guests had to step around him. When the Bodenheim protagonist finished, a dark girl with thick lips pressed her mouth against his. A man came out of the kitchen laden with empty gin bottles, which he placed around the unconscious man and then laboriously set candles in the bottles. He lit the candles, extinguished the lights, got a book, and began to read a terrifyingly real service over the dead.

Johnson took drinks slowly. Bill took whatever was offered. He passed out on a bed and slept a little while. Then Charlie came into the bedroom and slapped him hard until he sat up, waving his hand.

"Come on, Wis."

"The hell with you."

"We just have time to make the seven o'clock train. It's Sunday night, Wis. We got to be at work in the morning."

"Go on home."

Charlie left. At four in the morning Bill awakened again. The

place was dark and quiet. Faintly he could hear a woman sobbing. He got up and tiptoed out of the bedroom, bumping into things and wondering where he was. The crying became clearer and he felt his way across the living room until he felt a wet face.

"What's the matter?" he said.

"That . . . fellow . . . over there."

Bill looked across the dark room and could see nothing.

"Yeah? What did he do?"

"Called my father . . . a bum."

"Well, maybe your father is a bum."

The wailing became louder. Somewhere he could hear a subdued male voice on a phone. "Is this Morningside 9090? . . . Is Miss Barringer there? . . . Oh! Hello, Mrs. Barringer! This is Chuck. . . . What, Mrs. Barringer? . . . You don't say! Well, to tell the truth, I didn't realize it was that late. I just wanted to phone Lucille and apologize for not showing up. . . . Yes. You're right, of course. I'll tell her all about it when I see her. . . . Good night, Mrs. Barringer. I'm awfully sorry. . . . Night. . . ."

Bill wandered out into the kitchen and threw a switch. The bottles were empty. He shook each one carefully and looked and smelled. Then he examined the unclean glasses and found pink gelatinous sediment in some. He drained those. He put them back on the drainboard and staggered inside and went to sleep.

He awakened at eleven in the morning in a bad panic. All he could think of was that it was Monday morning, that his family would be worried, Watson would be angry, and he would be fired from his job and everyone would find out about it. He couldn't get his trousers on right and his shoelace broke and he had chills and perspiration. He kept thinking: I can't go back there now. It's too late. I can't. It would be fatal. My hands are shaking. Watson would know in a minute. No. I've got to stay out today. What I need first of all is a drink. Just one. Then I'll get something to eat. Then I'll take a bath and shave. Tomorrow, when I get into the office, I'll have a good excuse ready. That's the way to handle it. That's the way.

He tried to phone Thayer at the honeymoon flat. He noted that the apartment had crackers on the floor, the beds were unmade, there were old newspapers lying inside out and towels in corners. Then he asked himself how the hell he expected to phone Thayer when the man had just moved into the apartment. Next came the wallet. He never knew what he would find in it and it was always a source of increasing tension to look. He found two dollars.

On the way to Thayer's place he stopped in at a corner drug-store which also sold gin. He ripped open the bottle on the stairs and had two quick ones. Thayer was peeved.

"Where the hell you been? Do you realize that your mother has been sending wires to find out what happened to you? Do you know that Charlie's been phoning all over New York trying to find you? Everyone down home has been going nuts."

Bill sat down. Edith came out in a robe and took a look at Bill and asked Thayer to take it easy with him. She made coffee. He told Thayer that he was going to straighten up and would Thayer and Edith please bear with him a little while. They said sure. So he stayed with them all day, telling himself to take it very easy with the drinks and promising himself that each one was the last for that day.

He went out to dinner with them. But he was hazy about it and hardly remembered it. He kept begging himself not to wander, to please remember to stick with them all night. Tuesday morning he awakened on a couch in the living room. It was six o'clock and Edith was making coffee. Bill couldn't drink it nor stand the odor of it. He felt like pulling the bedclothes over his head and going to sleep again.

Thayer was considerate. He put a quart of gin in Bill's hand and sent him out to catch the seven o'clock train. It was six-forty. He gave Bill some money and Bill wandered downstairs dazed and worried and hailed cabs but they all fled by. He got desperate again and ran into a near-by alley, pushed the brown paper bag away from the top of the bottle, and tore at the top until his fingers were sore. When he took a big drink it went down

the wrong way and he was racked with spasms. Gin spilled on the bottom of his tie and he knew that his eyes were now red. And you couldn't fool old man Watson with red eyes.

He made the train at the last second and got into the vestibule seat in the last car. A tall and lanky brakeman came in. He had broken peripheral arteries in both cheeks and tiny hemorrhages in both eyes. Bill smiled. The brakeman took the seat opposite.

"God!" said Bill. "Have I got a hangover!"

"You got a hangover!" said the brakeman. "I've got a beant. In spades."

"I'm two days late getting back to the office. I'll get canned and the family will kill me."

"Oh, that ain't nothin'. I do as I please. I keep tellin' the old lady if I feel like getting drunk, why, I'll just go out and get drunk and what is she going to do about it? Not a damn thing. And tell me this: what the hell *can* she do? Not a thing. So stop worrying. I gave up worrying years——"

"Have a drink?"

"Say!"

He took a long, slow, gurgling drink. Then he wiped the top off and handed it back. Bill took one. At New Brunswick the brakeman got up and collected tickets and met the conductor somewhere up forward and then he came back and they had another. And another. Then two more. They began to talk like old friends. They were roaring through Princeton Junction when he got up again. He swayed with the cars but no one noticed anything and then he came back and they each had a drink to the bridge over the Delaware, and then one more to the poor non-alcoholic Delaware itself.

Bill was getting more and more excited as he approached Philadelphia. He was slightly more than half drunk as the train screeched to a stop and its air brakes sighed. Bill and the brakeman got off the last car together. The brakeman had a lantern, some torpedoes, and a handful of flags. They locked arms, the brakeman gave the lantern to Bill, and they staggered up the platform together.

The lantern was smoking and Bill choked. People stared at them. Then the conductor walked up and put his finger tips against the brakeman's chest.

"Listen, Joe. Don't go near the division superintendent's office. Now listen to me. Good God, stay away!"

They pushed him aside, hollering loudly and incoherently, and weaved up the platform. The brakeman reached a black iron ladder and started climbing. Bill dropped his lantern on the ground and followed up behind him. They got to the top and crossed to the station office. The man inside took one long look at the brakeman. There was no anger in his face.

"All right, Joe," he said. "That's enough. You're through. I've stood all of this I'm going to. Now go on home."

The panic burgeoned in Bill again.

"Listen," he said. "It's all my fault. I got him drunk."

The man said: "You get out of here and leave him alone. Now beat it." Joe sat down and buried his face in his hands. Bill went back down the ladder and picked up his lantern. He hugged it grimly to his chest as he got on a Chestnut Street car. People were looking at him and his lantern. He knew that but he didn't care. He had just thought of a fine idea. If he walked into the office with the lantern old man Watson would have to laugh. And you can't fire a man who makes you laugh, can you? So he hugged the lamp and got off at Fourth and Walnut.

The policeman on the corner saw him and came over. Curtis and Watson's office was almost directly across the street. The policeman studied Bill for a moment and then he jollied the lantern right out of his arms. He walked away with it. Hazily Bill could see Charlie Templeton, assistant to Mr. Watson, standing stunned inside the window of the office. Charlie made frantic motions for Bill to go away.

Then he disappeared from the window and went out the back way and sidled along the wall until he got to Bill.

"You crazy?" he said. "What are you trying to do? Get fired?"

"I'm going in to see Watson. He in?"

"Are you nuts, Wis?"

"He can't fire me, Charlie. I'm going in to quit."

"You stay right here, Wis. I'll get my hat and coat." He drove Bill out to the Philadelphia Country Club in Cynwyd and they had some drinks together and Bill fell asleep.

On Friday he awakened and the steward brought him a letter. It read:

MY DEAR WISTER:

*As you know, we have discussed this very serious situation involving your many absences from the office before. It is not only unfair, it is bad for the morale of the rest of the office staff. For those reasons your services will no longer be required. We will, of course, arrange to give you the usual two weeks' salary.*

*You must believe that I am very sorry to have to do this.*

Sincerely,

C. W. WATSON

Bill relaxed. And grinned. He felt as though he had been released from prison.

1921

WILLIAM WYNNE WISTER sat up in bed and surveyed the world. It wasn't bad. It really wasn't bad at all. There were Watsons who could fire you; but there were flappers who could enlighten you. There were fathers who condemned and mothers who condoned, and there was prohibition throughout the land and hideaways where a man could press his nose against a glass peephole and say with some authenticity: "Joe sent me." There were fat little men playing golf in knickerbockers and women who shingled their hair and businessmen whose after-hours forte was that they were tired. There were girls who cultivated flat chests and long waistlines and short skirts and there were boys who called themselves "sharpies" and wore bell-bottomed trousers and pinchback coats. A few women smoked cigarettes and there was much talk of "freedom" and in Washington statesmen and thieves

sat with President Harding and talked of "normalcy." But it wasn't really a bad world. Not bad at all.

That night Bill went to Wendy Benson's coming-out party. Her father owned horses and art galleries and big houses in Palm Beach and mansions in Philadelphia. It was all very formal, of course. Sixty were invited to dinner, and two hundred and fifty others were invited to the dance afterward. Bill had a few drinks with the Brettons first and then was driven up in their big Crane-Simplex. He was under control when he got out and walked up the red carpeting into the mansion. He had heard that there were two million in paintings in the place, but he was not interested in those now. He was aware of the other statistics: the rugs were all four inches thick, there was a heated indoor swimming pool, there were wings to the house which were, reputedly, unexplored, and two Negro bands were taking turns on the podium, so that the music was incessant, and the champagne was inexhaustible.

Bill walked inside at nine. The butler took his card and growled: "Mr. Wister." There was a long hall with giant mirrors and, every ten feet, flunkies in white socks and satin knee breeches, with white lace jabots at the throat. They stood in patent-leather shoes with big silver buckles and they did nothing to add or detract from the party except to hold their thumbs at the seams of their breeches and stare, chin-high, across the hall.

There were gay greetings from the young crowd and somewhere near by a Negro quartet was harmonizing. There was a large room with about twenty tables in which young folks sat, rosy in the reflected lights of the small table lamps, and watched the entertainers come and go. There was dinner, but no one seemed particularly interested in it. There was more interest in watching the waiters come in with iced champagne and in dancing between dinner courses.

Wendy looked lovely and increased her coterie of friends more by her charm than by her father's lavishness. Her father watched the antics of the young crowd and ordered the waiters to say that there was no more champagne.

One young man with pink cheeks and slick hair rose from Bill's

table and said rather loudly: "Oh balls! Let's open the pantry ourselves." Bill and a group of young braves jumped up and stampeded through the swinging doors and got to the butler's pantry, where they found about ten washtubs filled with cold champagne.

Mr. Benson caught them and hollered about their bad manners and demanded to know by what right they walked into his pantry to "steal" his wine. A few engaged him in argument while the rest disappeared inside with the booty. Soon there was more dancing and more singing with the entertainers and more probing by lip and hand. Some of the girls excused themselves to stagger into other big rooms to vomit on rugs. Boys who had never smoked before grabbed free Havana cigars and smoked and flicked the ashes anywhere. Thayer Bretton got falling-down drunk and Edith giggled and staggered around behind him.

A young man saw Mr. Benson standing beside him, scowling, and loudly demanded that "this waiter either bring me champagne or get himself fired." Some got lost and wandered into the art gallery, where there was a life-size painting of a dying torero. One drunk studied it and wept. "Where was he stabbed?" Another drunk sobbed in sympathy and moaned: "In the art gallery."

Bill wandered into the heated natatorium, where girls who had shed their evening gowns, slips, and underclothing, were now swimming in the nude or lying on the tile. Thayer lurched in, red-eyed, shed all his clothes, and plunged in. Other boys followed.

It was after two in the morning when Bill and some friends took Thayer in tow and wandered upstairs into one of the wings looking for a shower. They put his formal clothes on, adjusted his tie, and pushed him under the water. It was cold. As it struck him he screamed and vomited a mixture of claret and port.

"Christ!" yelled someone. "He's had a hemorrhage!" Thayer unconsciously flailed with his arms and caught Bill with tremendous force directly over the right ear. It rang for three days.

He got home at 10 A.M. in a dinner jacket, a felt hat, pumps,

and black tie, and drew a warm bath and fell asleep in it for two hours. It was noon when he heard his father say:

"This is a nice hour to be getting home."

Bill paid no attention. The warm water was balm to a tired body.

"Bessie! You'll have to watch him and his drinking and gadding about all night!"

Bill could vaguely hear that too. And the answer:

"He's young and he's no different from the rest of his set. He'll grow out of it."

"Well, he's not getting anywhere. He's batting air. He doesn't want to work and he has no interests or hobbies. I'm getting sick of it."

"Oh, Charlie. It's not *that* serious!"

## 1921

BILL LONGED FOR a whiff of the glamor of the RAF and King Street and Long Branch, so he went back to Canada and to Ned King's office. The old man stared coldly and had no time for him and suggested a visit to Montreal where a man might have fun. Bill visited the old encampment and found that the barracks were tilted, the paint was peeling, and, on the parade ground, weeds stood to attention.

He went to Montreal and took a room at the Rountree. It was morning and he felt saddened. He bought a fifth of King William for two dollars and ten cents. He went back to his room, took three or four fat drinks, and sat down and thought about scotch and looked out the window and then he felt that he might like Montreal.

He did. He even took a bus ride and met a French-Canadian girl. She had onyx eyes and she laughed easily. He made a date for the theater for the evening. Now he began to feel a new excitement. He had trouble getting theater tickets. When he was dressed he sat on the edge of the bed and thought about the girl and her eyes and her laughter. He drank scotch, waiting for the

time to pass and wondering what the girl was like. He awakened on the bed with his overcoat on and the tickets in his hand and it was morning.

It was 11 A.M. and he felt angry and frustrated. He invited a room clerk to his room to have a few drinks. The clerk knew everything about Montreal.

"Any fun in this town?"

"Sure. How you fixed for money?"

"I've got some."

"Well, there's a place here you'd never see in the States. It's called the Ninety-six Club. It's very exclusive and you have to be known."

They had another drink. Then the clerk gave Bill the directions.

"When you get to the Ninety-six, give your right name and the fact that you come from Philadelphia. You can give my name as a reference. You've got to be on the level with them or they'll throw you out. Be careful and you'll have a swell time."

"Okay."

Bill hired a barouche. The driver heard Ninety-six and he touched his silk hat and said, "Yes sir." It was a fifteen-minute drive. The barouche stopped in front of an elegant home with gingerbread on the eaves and an iron fence and a brass deer on the lawn. He paid the driver and walked through the gate and up onto the porch. There was a massive door with a chased grill and a white lace curtain behind it. A colored maid answered and he told her that he wanted to see Mme. Beaufort. She showed him to a sitting room.

It was done tastefully in dark red. There was a coal grate and folding doors and antimacassars on the chairs. He waited five minutes. Then the folding doors parted and a stout, fortyish, good-looking woman entered. She sat down near him.

"I'm Mme. Beaufort."

"I'm William Wister and I'm staying at the Rountree." He tried a wink of a smile. "I'm from Philadelphia and I'm looking for some fun."

"Oh yes? I know some people from Philadelphia. Do you know the Bordens?"

"Keith Borden?"

He could see Madame relax. She exchanged the cautious smile for a real one. "How is dear Keith? He had a wonderful time when he was up here. But when that boy drinks! *Mon dieu!* The girls would not even talk to him. He chased them through the rooms, you know?" She shrugged. "I had to call my good friend of the police department to make him behave. Do all you young men from Philadelphia act like this when you drink and have girls? I do not intend to offend, but we cannot have more of this. This is respectable."

"I'm sure you'll have no trouble with me."

She took his hand and led him into a big room where a man played a piano softly and a violinist bowed over him, reading from the same sheet of music. Several men sat at tables with attractive girls. There was a big table with seven or eight girls chatting and laughing.

Bill ordered champagne. He noticed that the girls were dressed better than any he had seen in Philadelphia. He had two drinks with Mme. Beaufort, and much conversation. Then she began to call him Blondie and he called her Ella.

"Do you see any girl you'd like to have fun with? There are some lovely girls here now. More will be in later. If you have fun with one, and you don't like her, I will change it for you. You cannot select any girl who is sitting with a man."

"I never dreamed that there was a place like this." He nodded his head toward the big table. "See that girl with the gold ribbon in her hair?"

"You mean the one at the left?"

"The one with the gold band."

Madame rose. She walked over to the table, bent over it, and all the girls appeared to listen. Then they all looked over at Bill. The girl with the gold band smiled and came over to be introduced. Her face was naturally beautiful and she had thick black

eyebrows and a fine figure which had many great and smaller roundnesses. She was introduced as Marie.

They had two champagnes and she asked where he came from and what it was like there and how he liked Montreal. They danced. He was impelled to hold her close, but the whole place seethed with restraint. She said she liked the way he danced. They had more drinks. Then Marie said:

"Shall we go upstairs?"

"Fine. Fine." He carried the champagne.

Madame rang a buzzer and a colored maid went upstairs. Then Bill and Marie went upstairs into a big room, where the colored maid was turning down the counterpane. The maid left. There were big closets and fine easy chairs. The maid came back to the doorway. "Ring if you want sandwiches or something to drink." Bill nodded. There was a chaise longue and two great windows which almost touched the floor.

Marie stood looking at him. She smiled at him with the patient smile of a woman who knows that this is not the routine. He knew then. He kissed her. He did not become fresh. He kissed her again. Then he felt a slight response and he kissed her a third time. He knew that she would have to throw him the cue lines. And she did.

Bill found himself in the bathroom, undressing. He didn't know why, in an infamous place like this, a man had to go to the privacy of a bathroom to undress, but he felt that Marie wanted it that way. He took off everything but his shorts. Then he came out. He felt ridiculous. Marie didn't smile. She had removed all of her clothing except lace-edged peach panties and was lying on the chaise longue.

He managed to find a small place beside her and he kissed her and they played. He kidded her about her French-Canadian accent and asked her to pronounce certain words and roared with laughter. He felt that this was romance, not a purchase. He felt that she sort of liked him, that it was not just part of her work.

She got up and walked over to the bed, the back of her looking young and tender and almost naïve. She wiggled out of her

panties and got into bed and pulled the bedclothes up. He followed.

They sat and talked. He reached out of bed, ringing the bell, and the maid came in, startled that she should be called so quickly. He ordered champagne and fruit salad.

He got out of bed and put his shorts on. Marie put her panties on. Then she sat on his lap on the bed. They talked of skiing and he told her about the bus ride and the girl and he talked of his service with the RAF and she told him about the gay parties in winter and they made fantastic plans together and had more drinks. He liked Marie. It was more than sex. In the evening they got dressed and went downstairs and had tea. They danced and ordered more drinks. She excused herself. While she was away Madame came over to Bill.

"Marie surprised me," she said, smiling. "She is varry fond of you, Blondie. She has gone to dress and she tells me you are varry interesting."

Bill began to call everyone by first names. He felt fine. He had no worries and he was happy with Marie. Marie came back in a gold evening dress, a black turban, and tiny gold earrings. The dancing was gay. Everyone danced and there was a lot of cutting in. Bill found himself dancing with one girl after another while a man with an accordion played "Love Nest" and "Margie." Bill met another fellow and girl and they became friendly.

The foursome hired a barouche and had welsh rabbit at a hotel grill. They strolled on a porch and Bill knew in a vague way that there was music inside and it was cold on the porch and there was a valley with farm lights below. The girls were dignified and friendly and he felt that there were certain things he could not do and certain things he could not say. He kissed Marie and on the way back to Ninety-six the foursome sang such songs as they had in common. They danced at the club until three, and then they went upstairs to bed.

On the way up he saw the madame and asked her how much he owed.

"Pooh-pooh! We never talk of money. If you do not pay all now you send it to me, *non?*"

He didn't feel tired or drunk and he made love to Marie. He tried to give her money and she cried.

In the morning the maid brought breakfast and Marie went into the bathroom to dress. He followed when she came out. They sat tailor-fashion on the bed and ate from a big silver tray and laughed and made jokes about the people downstairs. The maid came in and hung up his clothes and they laughed at her and he was sure that he never wanted to leave.

They went for a ride in a barouche. They were covered with a bearskin rug and Marie showed him the sights of Montreal. She took him to a tiny French restaurant where they had lunch. Looking at her across the table, he began to feel that this was a honeymoon or what a honeymoon ought to be like.

In the afternoon they went upstairs and lingered with each other and now the kisses were slow and very tender and he had a tremendous feeling of not wanting to hurt her at any time and of wanting to do anything to earn one more smile from her. Then they dozed.

Later, when it was dark, they dressed and went downstairs and had more champagne and some dinner. Time began to catch up with Bill. He got drunk. Marie kept saying: "Shhh! Bill, not so loud!" In his presence she told Mme. Beaufort what a wonderful time she had had. "We weel not discuss my Blondie," she said. They danced. He drank more. Then he got really drunk and fell asleep with his clothes on. She slept beside him.

At five he arose.

"Gotta get the hell out of here," he said. "This thing can't go on, Marie. It's been wonderful, but I've simply got to go now."

Marie whimpered on the bed.

"I'll come back. Don't worry. I'll be back."

He put his hat on and she called a barouche for him.

"Please don't go."

"I'll be back, I said."

"Hurry back, Bill. Please hurry."

He got Marie to awaken Mme. Beaufort, who came out, sleepy and smiling and squinting, in a kimono full of feathers.

"How much do I owe?"

She got a tab and a pencil and figured it out. There was Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning.

"One hundred ten dollars including five-dollar tip for the maid."

He had been sure it would be more. "Is that enough?"

"Plenty."

"Will Marie be taken care of? I want to make sure about Marie."

"Don't you worry about Marie."

He had a shirt on, no tie. He had socks on, no shoes. He was quite drunk.

He stood in the back of the barouche waving good-by. Marie stood in the doorway crying. It was cold but she stood there crying. Then he noticed the tears and the sobbing and he yelled: "I'll be back! Christ almighty, when I say I'll be back, I'll be back!"

She pressed her finger to her lips and tried to shush him as she wept. Then the horse started and he fell back into the rear seat. There was the sound of the horse on the cobblestones and the echo back from the unlighted houses. He sat in his stocking feet and wondered what kind of a train he could get home.

When he walked into the lobby of the Rountree it was full of foreign-born stout women scrubbing the tile floor. There was soapy water all over and he slid up and down the floor and hopped from one mop to another for the ride. The night manager came out and told him to stop.

"I'll stop every goddam mop in the place. What do you think of that!"

"I'll have you arrested." The manager hurried to a phone.

Bill ran into an elevator and then forgot what his room number was and sweated with the thought of police. The elevator operator helped him find the right number and he fell into bed with all his clothes on.

He awakened after three in the afternoon. The phone was ringing. He picked it up.

"Hello?"

"There's a lady in the lobby, Mr. Wister. Her name is Mlle. Marcoin."

"I don't know any mademoiselle in Montreal."

"Well, she is rather dark and attractive. She is wearing a gold—"

"Christ! Send her up!"

She came up and he could see that she had been weeping again. She had a long package in her arms, and she said: "Oh, Bill. You must get yourself together. You must eat!"

He stood looking at her and he felt bad. He pulled her to him and kissed her. Then he changed his clothes and told her that he must catch a train right away. She pressed the package into his hands.

"This is for you. From me."

He looked at her. Then he opened it. It was a gold-headed cane.

"Aw, now look. You shouldn't have done that. Take it back."

"Non, non." She stuffed her pretty ears with her fingers.

He took her downstairs to dinner. As they talked a feeling of imprisonment came over him. He had to be rid of her quickly.

"I have to make my train right away, and listen. I'll be back in Montreal in a few weeks and I swear I'll run right over to see you. But please, please, Marie, take that cane back."

She didn't answer. She looked at him accusingly. He knew it was no use. He called a barouche and kissed her good-by. Then he stood on the curb and waved as the barouche clattered down the street. He knew he'd never see her again. He waved her out of sight.

When he got on the train he snapped his fingers. It came to him. She didn't want to take money for their fun and she knew he wouldn't take money back, so she invested it in a cane and that cleared her conscience.

## *Book Two*

### THE ALCOHOLIC

1922

IT WAS a cold morning in March. Bill was asleep at home. There was a Red scare. But he didn't know it. The open shop was called "The American Plan." But he didn't know it. William J. Burns said that the number of resident Communists was 422,000, but S. Stanwood Menken made it 600,000. Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York learned that the Reds were holding 10,000 meetings a week. There was hardly a liberal organization in America which was not called bolshevik. But Bill slept soundly. And he feared not. Except for himself.

He awakened by himself at nine, blinking in the reflected sunlight, and he tried hard to reconstruct the night before and wondered how he had gotten home. He felt apprehensive. He wished he could get away from Mother and Dad. Absent-mindedly he tried to push the bottom of the bed out with his feet.

He threw off the bedclothes. He was perspiring. Then he felt chilled and pulled them back up again. All the little incidents of his life were magnified. He listened for sounds. He wondered if his mother and father were going to come upstairs. He thought: If I wait, maybe Mother will go out. Then I can dress without being disturbed and I can go out and get a drink.

He wanted to go to the bathroom. Badly. But he was afraid that his feet would make a whisper that would tell his mother he

was awake. Then he began to argue with himself whether to brush his teeth first or go to the bathroom first. It killed time and it was worth self-argument. He couldn't make a decision. Then he began to argue his alcoholism. He drank, yes. Did he have a drinking problem? No.

I'm not a drunk. I just drink badly. I've got to be more careful to eat when I drink. And I should count the drinks. I drank well a few years ago. Everybody admired me for the way I could hold it. Well, I'm twenty-one now. I'm a man. I can do the same thing again. But God! I've been careless.

He was still thinking at ten when there was a tap at the door. He pulled the bedclothes up and got up on one elbow, nervous and defensive.

"Come in."

It was Dr. Bond. The doctor had white hair, parted on one side, and bronze skin. He was sixty or better and he spoke loudly.

"How you feeling, Bill?"

"Terrible." Bill watched him suspiciously as he walked around the bed, pulled up a chair, and placed his black bag beside it.

"Well," he roared, "there's not much I can do. Your mother called me and told me that you're sick. I think the first thing we ought to do is to have a good cleaning out. I want you to take some citrate of magnesia. I want you to stay in bed today. And you've got to try and get some nourishing things down. Do you take an egg and milk?"

Bill winced.

"Well, perhaps some chocolate milk. The main thing is that you must have nourishment. I'm going to leave a prescription with your mother. She'll get you some mild sleeping pills. I want you to get a good night's rest, Bill."

The doctor coughed behind his hand. It was obvious that he was going to say something of vital importance and he had left the bedroom door open and was talking loudly. That meant that his mother was listening.

"Now—uh—Bill. What about this drinking of yours?"

"Well," said Bill belligerently, rising higher on his elbow, "what about it?"

"Ha! Don't you think you're getting into trouble with this stuff?"

"I guess we all do at times."

The doctor had nothing to say. Bill was angry. "There are times when all of us drink too much," said Bill. "I have a lot of friends who drink more than I do."

"I know. I know. But you know you've got your mother and father worried about you. They've been in touch with me, and as you know I've seen you before in this condition. Now I've told them that I have a friend out in Wyoming. As a matter of fact I've suggested it for quite a few fellows.

"I really think that it would do you a lot of good to get out there on this ranch and build yourself up physically and lead a clean, outdoor life. The main thing is to get out of this environment for a while."

Bill lay back on the pillow. He was thinking. He had no idea that the hysterical conference between Bond and his parents had reached this stage. He knew that he had made a damned fool of himself at parties. He knew that his friends were afraid to invite him anywhere because they couldn't depend on him. He began to think that a change of scenery would be perfect. He liked the idea and the West sounded picturesque and appealing.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know."

"This is a real cattle ranch, Bill. You'll like this friend of mine, Sam Belcher. He's the kind of fellow who calls a spade a spade and he doesn't permit alcohol on his ranch and he won't hire a man who touches it. I told your mother that, if you agreed, I'd write a letter to Sam, because the sooner you get there the better—don't you think?"

"Yeah," said Bill. "It suits me all right."

"That's the spirit. Now you just take care of yourself and get on your feet and you'll hear from me in a couple of days."

He reached for the black bag and got out. Bill lay on his back and listened to Bond's big feet going downstairs and heard him loudly talking to Mrs. Wister.

"Now I've had a talk with Bill and I've explained our idea to him and he thinks well of it. I've got to run along now. You'll

hear from me in a couple of days. I'll get in touch with Belcher. I think everything is going to work out all right, Bessie. Good-by."

"Oh, fine, Frank. We'll hear from you then."

She came upstairs. When she came into the room Bill said: "I don't see any sense to this. There's nothing wrong with me, Mother. But if this is the way you want it, why, I'll do it."

He wanted to get started West quickly. He could hardly wait. He couldn't tell his mother that he didn't want to have to meet people and explain. He was sure that everyone would know that he was being sent West because he was a "drinker." He wanted to get out from under family supervision and away from the doctor. He was positive that when he got West he could drink in his own way because no one out there would know of his history. This time he would be careful.

"I don't think that's important," his mother said. "I think the thing to do is to get out there. It can't do you any harm. Unquestionably, it's going to do you a lot of good."

"Yeah. Guess you're right, Mother. I think so."

"I think you ought to start getting some things together."

"I will, Mother. Just as soon as I feel a little better. Perhaps tomorrow."

He took the magnesia and the chocolate milk and then dozed fitfully. In the evening he got up, took a bath and a shave, and had dinner with the family. He went to a movie to kill time. In the morning he phoned the doctor and asked when he could start West.

"I sent a night letter to Sam Belcher, Bill. I haven't heard from him yet. Maybe tomorrow morning. I'll phone you as soon as I get it. Why don't you start packing now?"

Bill packed two valises with heavy undershirts and army shoes. He bought a ticket to Cody, Wyoming. His mother gave him a hundred dollars. He said good-by to the family in the house and asked his mother to say good-by to Elizabeth, who was living with her husband in Boston. Dr. Bond phoned and said that Sam said it would be all right to go. Bill wired Belcher the time of arrival and asked him to be at the station.

"Good-by," his mother said. "Have a good time. Enjoy yourself. You stick with that man Belcher, Bill. He sounds like a fine fellow to me."

His father shook hands. "Well, son, I haven't got anything to say, except good luck. Take care of yourself and let us hear from you."

Bill stayed sober on the trip.

The branch line brought him into Cody on time. He looked out through a dusty window. It was April and the sun was apoplectic. There was a deceptive clearness in the air that made mountains far away look oppressively close. The town was across a rushing river high on banks above the plains and directly above the town there was a spillway.

Sam was waiting. He was a very big man who looked hard and flat and leathery. He had a sandy mustache and wore denim pants, high laced shoes, a black cotton shirt, and a cap. He was leaning against a wreck of a car and he said, "Mr. Wister?"

"Yes."

They shook hands. "I'm Sam Belcher."

Bill tried to chuckle. "Well, I guess you know all about me."

"As a matter of fact I don't. All I had was the wire from Bond. It's getting late and I have to pick up some things for the ranch." Sam helped him with his bags. "Maybe we'd better stay at the hotel tonight and have a chat and then go on out to the ranch in the morning. The ranch is forty-eight miles out, you know."

"Oh, is it?"

Sam drove across a bridge and up a hill and into the town proper. Offhand Cody looked like one main street, unpaved, with a half-dozen side streets bleeding into it. There was no building over two stories except the Irma Hotel, which had three. There were hitching posts and deep drainage gutters and two financial institutions made of stone and a restaurant and cowboys loping along on horses.

Everybody seemed to know Sam. They all said: "Evenin', Sam" or "Howdy, Sam." Sam parked his wreck in front of the

Irma and flipped his legs over the door getting out. Men were sitting around on the front porch and they all nodded and said, "Evenin'." Sam registered for a room and they went into the men's room and washed. Sam took off his cap to pat his hair with his wet hands.

At dinner Sam said: "You been havin' a little trouble back East?"

"Yes," said Bill. "I guess I've been drinking a little too much."

There was humor in Sam's eyes but none in his face. He waved a fork slowly.

"I'll tell ya, Mr. Wister. In my opinion that's good stuff to let alone. I never had no trouble with it myself. In fact I never touch it. But I've had some mighty good friends of mine go all to hell and I've felt bad about it and I tell ya it ain't worth it." He bent to the task of spearing food. "I got a fellow up at my ranch right now who drinks too much. He's from Philadelphia. Says he knows your mother."

"Is that so? What's his name?"

"Jack Motley."

"Can't recall that name."

"Well, he's a bit older than you. He'd be about your mother's age. Too bad. He's been back East a couple of times but he couldn't make the grade and his old man sent him back here. Damn shame. He's a hell of a nice fellow."

"Yeah. How long has he been with you?"

"Out of the trips home, ten years."

In the morning they got the ranch supplies and drove up the south fork of the Shoshone to Ishawooa. The road was bare and bumpy and there were cottonwoods and sagebrush and always, in the distance, the great, humbling mountains. Then they turned right and crossed a humpbacked bridge and saw the Shoshone murmuring over smooth stones and they were at Sam's front gate.

Sam had driven fast and brazenly and had spent much of the trip pointing out ranch houses on the road and explaining who owned them. He said that two miles farther up was Buffalo Bill's

old ranch. He pointed out the Cedar Mountains and the Rattle-snake Mountains and said they had snowcaps in August.

The ranch was a big L made of logs and chinked with cement, a one-story structure with a pitched roof. Along the inside of the L was a hitching rail and a well. In the front yard was a cabin built for old man Hoffman. Behind the ranch were the fields of alfalfa and back there were shoulder-high cabins with canvas roofs for short-term guests. There were barns to the north and then three hundred acres of grazing land to the east, and beyond that the gentle slopes of the base of the mountains. Sam's wasn't a dude ranch: it was a cattle ranch and he worked it.

Bill got to know the permanent characters quickly. Old man Hoffman was about eighty. Many years before Sam Belcher had told him: "When you get old and have nowhere to go I got a cabin built on my front lawn and it's yours." Now Hoffman had come to stay, and Sam paid him a little for being a handy man.

Spud MacKenzie, a ranch hand, watered the stock and did the milking. He was tall and wore high-heeled boots, a big black beaver hat with curled brim, and a black shirt. There was a kid from Canada, Clarence. He wanted to see the world and always carried a camera. Sometimes his folks wrote, and the letters caught up with him. But he never answered them and he kept working his way southward.

Jack Motley had the room on the right side of the corridor at the bottom of the L. He was over fifty and looked pale and tired and his jowls quivered. His eyes were rheumy and he was partly crippled from arthritis. He had a typewriter and books in his room. He was nearly always reading. When he wasn't he was writing stories about the West. He wore high brown shoes, tweedy trousers, a gray flannel shirt, and a sweater.

Before the arthritis hit him he did a lot of trout fishing. Now he couldn't hold a trout rod nor trust his fingers to hit the right typewriter keys. He was hungry for someone from back home to talk to, so he fawned on Bill and invited him to his room. After a while he said he had a sister who wouldn't speak to him because, she said, he had disgraced his family.

In his young days he used often to lurch into his father's office wildly drunk at 10 A.M. He had been sent out to Sam Belcher's place and a year later he was sent back as cured. He started drinking again and was sent back to Wyoming. Then he went home and "disgraced" the family again.

The last time his father had said: "Now, Sam, you've got to keep him out there. He has evidently inherited some taint and we can't cope with him. I don't care what it costs, but you've got to keep him on the ranch permanently. Don't let him go into town alone and don't give him any money."

So Jack Motley had been buried alive by his folks of necessity. Sam gave him two dollars a week for tobacco and aspirin and candy and books. He used to write poignant letters about the beauty of the West and then seal them and put them into a drawer because he had no one to mail them to.

There was one other character on the ranch: Mrs. Sam Belcher. She was prim and had taught school. She made Sam a fine wife and he was happy with her, though she tried to cure him of swearing. Bill used to enjoy driving a team of horses out to pick up the alfalfa and sometimes, on his way, he'd see Sam leave the ranch house to take the engine of his car down and he'd see Mrs. Sam stuff cotton in both ears long before the crankcase fell on Sam's face under the car and long before Sam began to roar the words that came out with so much authority and so little good manners.

Bill bought a black horse from Sam for fifty dollars. The horse's name was Spooks and he was young and stepped high. Next Bill bought an ornamental saddle with silver conchos for a hundred and sixty-five dollars. He spent a lot of time in the saddle, riding the trails up and down country. Jack Motley often advised him to try this trail or that, and told where the best scenic views were.

One morning Bill saddled Spooks and went out back through the alfalfa fields and up toward the mountain. The sun was warm, the air cool and clear. The mountains were barren and the creeks were loud with hurrying water. Bill followed the creek-sides and crossed at fords and kept working his way toward the

low mountain. The cattle grazed and lifted their heads when the horse loped by, and now and then a deer stood frozen to watch and then swung swiftly and disappeared. Here and there were wagon ruts, evidence that someone wanted timber badly enough to break a trail and go high for it.

He had been riding for an hour in isolated country when the horse stopped, almost unseating him. Bill kicked his ribs and the horse snorted, his ears stood like warning fingers, and he moved reluctantly. They moved up a steep trail and around a bend. Standing there was a man with gold teeth, which were bared without a smile, a cowboy hat, and one eye cocked.

"Where the hell are you going? You don't belong around here."

Bill looked beyond and to both sides of the man. There were no others, but up to the left about sixty feet was what appeared to be a bunch of upright railroad ties with metal sheathing between them and a dirt fill inside, and on top was a big metal kettle with copper wires from it and a roaring fire underneath.

"I'm staying with Sam Belcher. I came out here from Philadelphia."

"Oh, I suppose you drink too much too."

"Yeah." He began to grin. "I guess so."

"Would you like a little drink?"

"Sure. I don't mind."

"Well, come on up."

Bill dismounted and tied Spooks to a tree. He followed the man up the ragged incline and they were both puffing when they got up by the fire and the kettle.

"I sized you up when you was coming up the hill. I knew you was all right, sort of." He reached under a boulder and came out with a big tin cup of chipped enamel. He set it on the boulder, reached inside again, and sorted among glass jugs and crocks and small casks. He brought one out.

"This is my business, sort of. I got another job, but it's on the side. What's your name?"

"Wister. Bill Wister."

"Wister? That's all right. Everybody calls me Injin."

"Fine."

Injin poured into the tin cup an inch and a half of what appeared to be water.

"I bring this out at night. It's all sold in advance."

He handed the cup to Bill. Bill grinned his thanks, jerked the drink toward his benefactor, and then downed it. It was a long drink and it went down like live steam. He had spasms and his eyes watered and the goose flesh came up on his arms.

"I'm a Crow," said Injin. "Well, half."

"Good," said Bill, wiping his eyes. "I wish I could say that for your whisky."

"Oh hell. That ain't got flavoring yet. How did you like it, kid? That's the purest corn you can buy in this country. Double distilled."

Then the reaction came swift and warm and Bill began to feel at home. He was conscious that he had to go back to Sam's. He didn't want Sam to know.

"Have another?"

"Thanks."

They talked of the West and Injin told Bill where the stuff could be bought in Cody.

"I don't have to tell ya what would happen if ya told Sam. And I don't even want ya to come up here without me. I'm always glad to give ya a drink, kid. Any ol' time at all. But I gotta partner is very nervous."

Injin gave Bill an accurate picture of life along the Shoshone and told him who was important and who talked important but wasn't and who owned what and who hated who and who not to become too friendly with, and before the session ended they became friends. While Injin was talking Bill felt his lips and fingers become numb. He said good-by, rode Spooks back to Sam's, fiddled around the barn for a while, and then ducked into his room and spent some hours alone.

He began to feel that he might like the West permanently.

Ten days later a letter came from an old Philadelphia friend, Mickey Bonn. Mickey was working on a place forty miles to the south.

*This is some country. I hope it's better up where you are. Nothing but rocks and rattlesnakes and I sleep in a wagon box in a lean-to. I get forty a month and I'm hanging by my eyelids until I get some money. I'm going to get in touch with Mother and get some money and buy a ranch. Be up to see you soon.*

That was strange. Bill had been mulling over the same idea about a ranch.

On a June evening when the sun was low Mickey rode up on a mare. Towed behind on a rope was her spindly colt. On the mare was a saddlebag and a Navaho rug. For provisions he carried a can of tomatoes and a quart of corn whisky. He was wearing a bright red flannel shirt, a big gray hat pinched in front, a kerchief around his neck, and leather batwing chaps. Bill saw him from the porch.

Mickey yelled: "Hello, podnuh!"

Bill said hello. He was amused and worried because he didn't know what Mickey might do or say. Mickey obviously expected to be asked to stay overnight, and he was. Sam looked at him, squinting from the porch, and murmured: "That's a whole lot of cowboy!"

Bill helped him put his mare and colt in the barn and introduced him to old man Hoffman, who had turned out to be a whisky and coffee man. Hoffman invited both boys to his lawn cabin and got the coffee going. Sam was in the ranch house washing up before supper, so Mickey and Bill had a drink and bridged the gap from the old days in Philadelphia until now. Old man Hoffman half filled a giant mug with coffee and then put five drinks of raw corn in it.

"Coffee royale," he said, drinking it down in gulps.

Hoffman trusted Bill and almost always had a drink around the cabin for him, but he was afraid of Sam Belcher and, though he

liked Jack Motley and felt sorry for him, he wouldn't invite him to drink.

After supper they had a drink and Mickey said he was going to buy a ranch between Ishawooa and Valley Postoffice, on the other side of the river. He was on his way to examine the property and thought he'd better stop in and say hello.

"Why don't you come with me, Bill? After I see this place I'm going up in the hills for a while. I want to see some of this country."

"What equipment you got?"

"Equipment? I don't need any equipment. I have a can of tomatoes and I'll shoot a little game, maybe."

"I can't go, Mickey. I'd like to, but I'm trying to get some money from Mother to buy a ranch for myself. I'd like to warn you, though. Watch out for these hills. They're tricky."

"Don't worry about me." Mickey was short and broad and even stronger than he appeared to be.

"Hoffman can tell you. He's lived here most of his life. I left here the other morning in a cotton shirt and rode up into the mountains and got into a blizzard and damn near froze to death."

"That doesn't bother me."

They drank another one and went to bed. In the morning Mickey was gone. In mid-morning a letter came from Bill's mother saying that she didn't feel that it was right to buy a ranch at this time. "You ought to spend more time with Mr. Belcher until you get experience."

Bill brooded three days over the letter. Then he wrote another letter home. Originally his demand had been for eight thousand dollars. Now he had a newer, more conciliatory idea.

"I want to buy a pack outfit," he told Sam. "I can rent horses for pack parties. Hell, about twenty head ought to be enough. I mean, complete with packs. I can even sell twenty-one-day tours through Yellowstone, or take people on short hunting trips. I like it out here, Sam. I want to go into business for myself. Do you think that twenty-five hundred would be too much to ask for on a deal like this?"

Sam stroked his chin.

"No-o-o. I guess that would equip a twenty-horse pack all right."

The money came by return mail and Bill had a talk with Mickey. They worked out the world's most nebulous partnership, in which one owned a ranch and the other was a boarder with pack horses to come. They never got around to discussing who got how much and from whom. They settled in the place, played the phonograph, read some books, told each other how wonderful their ranch was, and jangled the phone to find more sources of corn whisky.

The Rancho Mickey was on a plateau a mile east of the Shoshone. Behind it were mountains, the range opposite Belcher's. It had practically no water rights. In all there were a hundred and sixty acres, ten of which were cleared. There was a busted irrigation ditch. The one-story log ranch house faced toward Cody. It had big windows and a large stone fireplace. On the side were several small cabins.

Bill and Mickey were sober for a month. In that time they rode over the hills to neighboring ranches and introduced themselves and discussed water problems. They told everyone all the things they were going to do to improve the property and what kind of horses they were going to buy. One morning Mickey went out with a shovel to fix one of the ditches. He worked an hour and then he threw down the shovel and said: "Oh, the hell with this!"

Then he went out and was gone a few hours. He came in beaming.

"Hey, Bill, I bought two swell horses."

Bill went out to look. Standing in the sun were two dozing gray beasts. They were sway-backed and Bill felt that he could toss a hat from any direction and it would hang on some part of the nags. One had long white eyelashes which he kept blinking as he slept.

Bill said: "Judas!"

Mickey said: "Some horses, hah?"

"How much?"

"Thirty-five apiece."

"My God!"

"Well, what's the matter? They look all right to me."

"Know what they call those things up here? Bear bait. You buy them for five dollars, lead them up into the bear country, and shoot 'em. After a few days they begin to stink up the landscape and the bear smells it and comes in to eat. Then you shoot yourself a bear. But these things couldn't be bear bait. They haven't got the strength to walk uphill."

Mickey thought they were fine specimens until the first time he fed them and discovered that oats gave them indigestion. Then he looked them in the mouth and discovered that their teeth were practically a figment of the imagination. He went back into the house and forgot them.

"I'm having a well dug," said Bill.

"Who's going to dig it?"

"I don't know. Somebody's dopey cousin. He's got a reputation around these parts. Wherever he digs, water comes like magic. He's coming up here at five bucks a day and he'll live here while he works."

"Sounds good. We're going to need water."

The man came up, leaned on his shovel, and said: "Well, where do you want it?"

"Oh, anywhere," Mickey said. "Make it close to the kitchen. You think you can find water there?"

The man staked off a spot and began to dig. He dug hard. He dug deep. Every now and then he'd come up grunting, take the surplus earth away, and go down and start digging again. At night he'd come inside and sit around smoking a pipe and talking about all the wells he'd dug and how he always struck water. Soon he was very deep. He brought a ladder, an assistant, a winch, and a bucket, and the rope creaked all day as they hauled the red clay up.

He had been digging three weeks when Mickey yelled: "How far you down?"

There was silence for a while. Then the voice rolled up hollowly: "Fifty-one feet."

"Jeez! You hit water?"

"Not yet."

"Then come on the hell up and forget about it. You're half-way to China."

The man came up. There was dirt in his hair and he blinked in the sun.

"First time this ever happened," he said. "First time. God-almighty! Anybody around here will tell you I hit water every time."

"I know," Mickey said. "But fifty-one feet—my God!"

The man took his tools and his assistant and Mickey refused to pay him more than twenty-five per cent of the five dollars a day. They argued and the man went away angry. The second night after that Mickey went out into the back yard. Bill heard him screaming and went out and saw that Mickey had fallen into the well and was hanging by his fingers onto the sides. The next day they boarded it over.

There was a financial conference at which Bill agreed to furnish all the food in return for board and keep for himself. Mickey agreed to keep the ranch up as his part of the deal. When they got their hundreds and hundreds of horses they'd have another conference and decide how to split that income.

They spent a lot of time riding off the plateau and down to neighboring ranches. One day they visited Valley Postoffice and met the clerk. He was very short and very broad and they learned later that he had been an All-American tackle many years before. Now he was graying but he looked powerful enough to move the post office with his shoulder.

"Four two-cent stamps."

"Take a book."

Bill glanced at him again.

"I said four."

"I'm tired of selling people four stamps! Take a book! You'll use them!" His voice sounded like a blow on the bottom of a heavy barrel.

"Look. I want four two-cent stamps."

The clerk doled them out. He walked away from the window and sat down and cleaned three fish with expert fingers. They asked him what the fish were. Brook trout, he said. They began a conversation with him. He said he guessed he liked fishing better than anything except maybe drinking. He liked drinking best of all and, third, he liked reading. His name was Walter Byron. When Mickey and Bill left that afternoon Walter left with them as the new ranch cook.

His part of the ranch life was to do all the cooking and bring in fish from the Shoshone now and then and carry water up from the river and not get drunk on the premises. He told them that he came from Philadelphia and that his father had died and that he had an income of eleven hundred dollars every nine months from his share of the estate.

They discovered that his favorite drink was straight grain alcohol, about a hundred and eighty proof, mixed with a little water and nutmeg, and heated. In the morning he prepared a skillet of bacon and eggs, and five minutes before it was ready he'd bust into the room occupied by Bill and Mickey and roar:

"Well, come on! Rise and shine, you bastards!"

Those were terms of affection after six drinks at dawn. They found that he had jugs of grain alcohol hidden all over the valley, and sometimes he had to get good and drunk to remember where he had hidden them.

Walter's security ran a cycle built around the eleven hundred he got every nine months. Just before he got it he became aggressive and independent. This feeling heightened to pure belligerence by the time the check arrived. Then he'd start cursing Wyoming, and Cody in particular, and he'd holler: "The hell with this country! I'm going up to Oregon! God's country!" Each time he got the check he'd get howling drunk and go up to Oregon and look at bungalows and bargain about price and go to saloons and get drunk again. He would be gone, on the average, ten weeks. Then he would come wandering back, broke and sick and timid and obliging, and take odd jobs as

cook or post-office clerk and save money to buy grain alcohol and hide it all over the valley. He took fish to neighboring ranches, did favors for people, never offered a drink to anyone, and never got fresh with girls.

Mickey and Bill told him he had a right to have his own horse. They presented him with the one with the long eyelashes.

One morning Mickey sat up and asked what time it was, and when he heard, he grumbled because Walter hadn't called them for breakfast. He couldn't have eaten anyway, but it was the principle.

They hollered for Walter and then they looked for him. He was wedged between the bathtub and the wall, drunk and unconscious. In his arms he carried a big bowl of batter which dripped down his shirt front. In the batter were four electric bulbs. There was a nutmeg grater near by, but that only explained what he had been drinking, not how he had gotten there.

After much effort they got Walter to bed. Then they did some drinking and went to bed early. It was late at night when they heard a roar and their door swung open. Walter came in with a big trident in his hands; he jabbed it under the bedclothes at Bill.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Get up quick! The whole damn Union Army's outside!"

They quieted him down and found that, when the light was turned on, his hallucinations disappeared. They gave him a heavy shot and put him to bed. Mickey kept chattering: "What you need is another drink, Walter. That's all you need, really." Byron waved him away and went to sleep.

## 1923

The Cody Stampede came the first week of July and lasted three days. There were parades with cowboy bands on horseback and stagecoaches and Buffalo Bill's famous Deadwood Stage, and out at the athletic field there were bronc-riding contests and wild-steer-milking contests and flat races and roping-and-

tying contests and trained-horse acts and singing cowboys and a lot of betting on the outcome of most of these.

Mickey and Bill went into town for it. They tried to keep Walter on the ranch, saying he had to water and feed the horses. But Walter said he could get a guest on one of the dude ranches to do it and he wasn't going to miss a Cody Stampede no matter what they said.

So they rode in and they saw Crow Indians from the reservation. The young bucks wore long, greasy black braids and denim pants and wide-brimmed hats and kerchiefs. They couldn't find drinks so they raided the drugstore for a patent medicine that was known to be forty proof. The Indians and the cowboys got drunk and shot bulbs out of the ceilings and some rode wildly down Cody's main street and nearly killed some old ladies. Others fell asleep on the porch of the Irma Hotel.

A few stood in the lobby around the stuffed buffalo which Buffalo Bill was supposed to have shot. It was probably the most cherished relic in the town.

Byron strode up to the desk and slapped his horse pistol onto the counter.

"Dan," he growled, "lock this up in the safe. Under no circumstances, even if the hotel burns down, don't give me this gun. No matter how I plead. Understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Byron." Dan was a small, timid man.

The gun was locked in the safe. An hour later Walter was back. His eyes were ruddy. He hammered his fist on the counter.

"Dan! An hour ago I checked a gun in here. Let me have it!" Dan swallowed.

"Now look here, Mr. Byron. I ain't gonna give it to you. Ain't no use askin'. Even if I gotta call Mr. Mencken down here."

"Listen," said Walter softly. "I'll beat your head against the top of that safe until it's a bloody pulp. Now give me that gun."

Dan tried to smile.

"Aw, Mr. Byron. You wouldn't do that to me." Dan knew that Sheriff Browning and his deputies always knew when Mickey or Bill or Walter came to town and the sheriff usually

knew exactly where they were every minute. Dan hoped the sheriff would walk into the lobby right then.

Walter looked around. He saw the stuffed buffalo.

"If you don't give me that gun, Dan, I'll ride that goddam buffalo right out of this lobby."

"I don't care what you do, Mr. Byron."

Walter swung around, hopped three times toward the buffalo, and then sprang upward. He came down astride the stuffed animal and it split in the middle as though it were made of paper. Walter fell on the pedestal below and thrashed around in the dust. He was still thrashing when Browning came in and arrested him.

Three hours later the sheriff did the usual. He opened the cell door, had a hearing before the justice of the peace, and Walter was fined one hundred dollars. Not having it, he was paroled on his own recognizance until he could dig it up. Then Browning gave him one hour to get out of town. Walter got.

The next morning Bill took two quick drinks and rode back to the ranch to check the horses. They had been fed and watered. He saw Walter in bed. Bill found a little liquor, which he drank, and had a nap. He knew that Mickey was safe in Tessie's, talking and drinking his head off. There was plenty of time to go into town later and pick him up when he left Tessie's.

Tessie's was a disorderly house outside of town. It was a one-girl house and Pearl was the girl. Everybody in Cody knew Tessie and Pearl and everyone respected them and said "how-dydo" and a man could get into a fight by making disparaging remarks about Pearl or Tessie.

Pearl was blond and twenty-two and had the correct number of bulges in correct proportion. She had a rugged, healthy attitude and fine snowy skin. Tessie was older, a quiet woman who minded her own business, and business was fine.

Mickey had started out as a customer but he had fallen in love with Pearl and now he spent a lot of time at the dining-room table chatting with his girl and with Tessie, but only when he was drunk. When he was sober he seldom thought of Pearl.

As Mickey sat talking to Pearl and Tessie a cowboy walked in with his hat in his hand. Tessie took him aside and talked to him and soon he went upstairs two at a time with Pearl. Mickey got sore and ordered her not to go but Pearl went.

Mickey hollered and went out. He had some more drinks and staggered into the Irma's restaurant, where the Frenchwoman had the concession. She was a dark, soft woman who looked as though she was afraid something terrible was going to happen any moment. She asked Mickey what he would like.

"Soup!" he said loudly. "Lots and lots of soup!"

She went into the kitchen. Mickey had a .45 revolver which he swung idly between his knees. He was brooding. Ken Brady and his missus, on their way up to their room, nodded at Mickey. The Frenchwoman came out and said she was heating the soup. Mickey didn't answer. He was thinking about that smelly-looking cowboy. The Frenchwoman sighed and went to other tables and took orders. Then she went out to the kitchen again. The gun went off and the sound exploded through the hotel and the diners ducked for dust.

The Frenchwoman came out of the kitchen screaming that she had burned her arm and had almost fallen into the soup. Dan came running from behind the room clerk's counter and Ken Brady came tearing down the steps in his underwear, shouting that he had just got into bed with his wife when someone fired a shot that splintered a bedpost. The sheriff came in and handcuffed Mickey, pretending to be a pal and asking him who he was trying to kill. When he found out it was an accident he threw Mickey into jail.

Three hours later he did the usual. He took Mickey before the justice of the peace, who found him guilty of disorderly conduct, fined him ten dollars, and made him promise to pay damages to the Irma. The sheriff released Mickey and gave him an hour to get out of town.

He went over to Tessie's with his hat in his hand and apologized. Then he sat and talked with Pearl and Tessie. He began to cry and put his head on Pearl's shoulder.

It was late afternoon when the phone rang at the ranch. Bill got up and answered it. The phone was on a party line which served twenty-five ranches. As he said hello he could hear all the other ranch phones being picked up.

"This is Walter. Christ, Bill, you better get down here right away. Mickey's gonna marry Pearl."

"What's the matter with you, still drunk?"

"Bill, I mean it. The whole town is talking about it."

"Well, Mickey's only kidding. He wouldn't marry a girl like that."

"The hell he is. He's got a parson and he's going to marry Pearl in the lobby of the Irma. Right where I busted the buffalo."

Bill knew Mickey's hangouts. They were three. He tried the Irma first. Mickey wasn't there. He tried Tessie's. He had gone and Pearl was glowing. Bill said: "It's none of my business, Pearl, but you're a fool to marry him. He's a no-good bum. He's drunk all the time. His family has disowned him and he's going to lose the ranch. You're too fine for him."

He left for the third place. That was Kitty Mino's boarding-house. Kitty was an old lady with lemon-colored hair and moons of rouge on her scrawny cheeks. Kitty Mino's was the last stop for drunks. When they were sick and drunk and broke she took them in, washed them, fed them, and bedded them down. Sometimes, when she waited patiently, they paid. Often they didn't.

Mickey was at Kitty's. He was in bed, his face puffed and dark red, and his lips, bridged with little strings of saliva, blowing outward with each breath. His hair was flattened forward on his head and curled down over his forehead. Kitty Mino said that he would be all right.

Bill awakened with a feeling that an earthquake was in progress. He looked up and saw a woman in a nightgown, holding a lantern high in one hand and shoveling coal with the other. He had awakened because his foot was in her shovel. Then she saw him. She screamed and dropped the shovel and ran. He scrambled through the shifting coal to a shed window and

ran down the street and across lots. The moon was pale in the morning sky when he rang the back doorbell of Kitty Mino's house.

She stuck her head out of an upstairs window. She was wearing a dust cap. She came down and let him in, panting and frightened. He was black with soot and she washed his face and neck and ears and helped him to get out of his sooty clothing and tucked him into bed.

"I talked to Pearl," she said. "The wedding is off."

He and Mickey stayed at Kitty Mino's for two days. Then they went home. Bill's twenty-five hundred dollars was almost gone. Mickey said he had very little money and he was tired of paying for things that Bill should have paid for. Bill said that he had paid for food and liquor until he was tired of it.

Walter Byron began to act independent and cooked meals only when he felt in the mood, so they knew that his remittance was about due. In late August 1923 Bill and Mickey had their final argument. Then Mickey left. Bill invited about six ranchers up for drinks.

In the middle of the party Mickey walked in with some friends from upriver who were pretty drunk too. Mickey didn't say hello. He looked around for his liquor but it was gone. He accused Bill of stealing it. Bill admitted the crime. Mickey stood there, staring at Bill and his friends and at some broken china on the rug. He pulled a gun.

"Get out," he said softly. "Get out or I'll blow your heads off. Get off this property."

The ranchers got their hats and mackinaws and started out. Mickey kept toying with the gun and watching them.

"You're just a goddam crook," he said to Bill. "Nobody will ever know what I had to put up with from you. But I'm finished now. I'm giving you until six tomorrow night to get off *my* ranch."

Mickey put his gun away and left with his friends to get more liquor. Bill stood there, weaving belligerently and watching them go. When they had gone he kicked the rug and went outside

to the places where he had hidden Mickey's liquor. He got drunk alone. Very drunk. Then he went to bed.

It was more than an hour after midnight when he awakened and smelled smoke. He sat up in bed and put a light on. Smoke was coming thin and gray under his door. He got up and staggered over and opened it. Heat slapped his skin. The living room was ablaze from floor to ceiling. He might have left by the bedroom window but he was panicked, so he wrapped his head in a blanket, exposing only the eyes, and ran through the living room and out the front door.

On the porch he saw the dinner bell that Walter had used. He picked it up and staggered off the porch onto the grass, clanging the bell mightily down the valley. Then he sat down and watched the ranch fire grow. He felt sorry to see the flames work inside the house. The first one forced its way through the roof and the fire rose higher and higher until the entire valley was lighted with flickering yellow light. The heat became intense and the smell of wood smoke was everywhere.

Bill sat near the hitching post and saw men belaboring their horses up onto the plateau. He felt tired and confused and when they came up he yelled:

"I don't know what the hell happened. I was sleeping. First thing I knew the whole damn place was on fire."

They hadn't asked him. Then Mickey came up, his eyes great and his chin sagging. He stood near Bill and said: "Well, that's that."

Then someone thought of the horses, but they were safe in the barn a hundred yards away. A neighboring rancher, one of the ones expelled from the ranch, invited Mickey and Bill to his place until they could decide what they were going to do.

In the morning Bill and Mickey sobered. They hardly talked. Bill saddled Spooks and rode back down to the ranch and looked at Mickey and said: "I'm shoving off."

Mickey said: "So long."

Bill drove slowly down the valley and over to the north branch of the Shoshone and got a job as a cook. He heard the talk

in the valley that he and Mickey had had a big fight and that he had set fire to the ranch in spite. He worked hard and felt miserable. Then he wrote a letter to his mother and got the money to go home.

1923

THIS WAS the time of the Teapot Dome scandal. It was a time of prosperity and the great search for a thrill. Everything seemed meaningless and unimportant and girls began to roll their stockings below their knees. Campus polls showed that nine out of ten boys and girls of high school age favored petting parties. Saxophones wailed and gin bottles fell from coat pockets to smash on the sidewalk and girls behind the counters of the five-and-tens were asking each other if they had read "that part in *Flaming Youth . . .*"

The winter season for smart Philadelphia was about to begin and Bill permitted everyone to know that he was back in town. He drank. But he drank with fear. His father said nothing about his drinking. His mother mentioned it once in a left-handed way: "Now I hope you're going to behave yourself here and get a job." Neither of them ever mentioned the twenty-five hundred again.

The first of the big parties came at Christmastime. The Moshurs presented Edith's younger sister, Annabelle, to society at the Bellevue-Stratford. There were bands and bunting and Bill had a restrainedly good time. He danced with the girls and he drank a little and then Charlie Johnson said: "Come on. I want to introduce you to an attractive girl." He took Bill by the arm and cut in on a tiny brunette who looked like Gloria Swanson.

"This is my friend from the West, Bill Wister. He's the fellow I've talked about so much."

The girl had very white teeth. "Oh, hello," she said. The voice was pitched for rich contralto. She wore a silver band around her head. Her name, he remembered as they danced, was Margot Elliott. In dancing, he discovered several things. She had

an engaging laugh, she lived about two squares from his house, and there was something very, very different about her. There was a certain something that he had not felt since the day a Packard with wire wheels pulled up to a stop.

He didn't get to take Margot home. She had come to the party with Terry Bromley, Jack's kid brother, and she went home with him. But before she left Margot asked Bill to come to her house Sunday afternoon.

The Elliots had a big house. Her mother was one of those remarkable women who, without apparently trying, win the worship of young people. Her father was an outwardly gruff, inwardly kindly man who ran a big railroad. On Sunday afternoons the Elliots held open house for all the nice young people.

It took Bill three months to eliminate all competition and become "secretly" engaged to Margot. He told her all about himself, omitting everything about his drinking and stressing the heroic side. She seldom had a chance to discuss herself, but on one or two occasions she managed to tell him that she was a singer and had starred in amateur operettas.

No date was set for the wedding. So far as Bill was concerned, the ideal life would have been to remain engaged forever. For the first time in his life William Wynne Wister went on the wagon.

1924

BILL GOT A JOB. And liked it. And kept it. He went over to Tabor and talked with a man in Hector and Knight. They made commercial dryers for the silk industry in Paterson, New Jersey, and the rayon people in Nashville, Tennessee. They made dryers for almost any product and they made the best.

"Someday, perhaps," the personnel manager said, "you may be a salesman here. But meanwhile you must learn the business. And the only way to learn this business is right from the ground up."

Bill's hours were from seven forty-five to five-fifteen. He used

a heavy riveting hammer and punched rivets. When he wasn't doing that he was learning about temperatures, steam pressures, fan drive, British thermal units, and what happens to moving air. He liked machinery and he liked the rugged labor.

He knew that it made an impression on his family and friends that he was earning twenty a week by the sweat of his brow. He knew that it was a topic of Philadelphia conversation. And he liked it. His father did not mention the job. But his mother did. She thought it was simply wonderful. He got the job in March. In three months he became assistant to an erector, the man who takes the finished dryer, puts it together on a big floor, numbers the parts, takes the dryer down, and orders it crated and shipped to the purchaser. Bill had to learn to read blueprints. After that he was put in charge of erecting and disassembling small dryers.

His mother bought a secondhand Ford roadster for him. He used it well, driving to and from Tabor and to and from Cape May.

The Elliotts had rented a cottage there. In a sense it wasn't a cottage at all but rather a house with plenty of room and a sagging porch which matched all the other sagging porches around. He went there on week ends. Margot was in a warm flush of expectancy. She had already decided which man; the remaining riddle was when.

Almost all of the more thoroughgoing alcoholics of Philadelphia were there that summer. Bill knew most of them, and those he didn't know he met. In no time at all he was the recipient of much handshaking and many drinks and he got drunk and passed out. After that the week ends followed a pattern. He arrived at Cape May Saturday afternoon and had drinks and dinner and then he took Margot to summer dances and had more drinks and afterward they would park somewhere and kiss and plan.

Sometimes Charlie Johnson came down. He usually brought a satchel with two quarts of rye and two fifths of gin. It was fashionable all over America to do these things and it was not fashionable to drink well and go home vertically. The routine

on Sunday was to arise at seven, don swim shorts, and join a few of the men for an icy, eye-opening dip in the boiling surf. The moment this was dispensed with—and Bill found that it was often dispensed with by dipping a big toe in a wave edge—the men ran up the beach to someone's cottage. There, panting and laughing, they concocted tall frosty-frimmed gin rickeys and sat and sipped and felt the bleakness dissipate in the early sun. Bill usually felt silly. He was hung over but it seemed to affect his nervous visibility and everything that was said or done was excruciatingly funny. After two or three drinks everyone felt fine and trooped in to a steaming breakfast. Bill sat with the others and tried hard to pretend to sip his coffee. He spooned his cereal and his eggs as though about to attack them. They always escaped with light lacerations.

After breakfast he felt impelled to drink more but he was afraid of the Elliotts. So he marked time, smiling and being jovial, until noon. At that time on Sundays Mr. Elliott served cocktails. Two or three relaxed Bill so that he could sit down to lunch with the family and eat. After lunch everyone changed to bathing suits and went down to the sand and met everyone else and talked a lot and bathed a little. Late in the afternoon Bill dressed and made his farewells and chugged his model T back to Philadelphia.

In the fall he was given the job of trouble shooter, rushing around to big plants in the East which had dryers and reporting certain ones in need of repairs. These had to be fixed between the close of the working day on Saturday and the opening of the plant on Monday morning. For Christmas he bought Margot a crowned diamond ring with oval filigree work around it filled with smaller diamonds.

In this year of achievement he wasn't often home. He worked hard and they raised his salary to thirty-five a week. The following summer he spent his week ends in Cape May getting drunk.

1925

THE DATE was set for October first. There was no religious difficulty. Bill was an Episcopalian and Margot was a Roman Catholic and those things have been known to lead to trouble, but Bill didn't feel stiffly about the subject, and it was agreed that he would talk to Father Rafferty of Philadelphia sometime before the wedding and that everything would be all right.

Mr. Elliott explained to Bill that he too was Episcopalian but that Mrs. Elliott was a devout Catholic and matters had worked out well for them for a quarter of a century. After that there was more drinking and a luncheon was arranged for the couple, but Bill was so sick that he couldn't tie his shoelaces and someone made his apologies and explained that he wasn't feeling well.

October first came up warm. Bill defied tradition and went over to the Elliott house. Margot fled before he arrived. Bill thought it was silly, but Margot said it was bad for bridegrooms to see the bride on the day of the ceremony. There was a big room full of presents of silver and gold and spun glass and cut glass and crystal and novelties and things they would use and other things they wouldn't. Two railroad detectives glowered.

A few weeks before, Father Rafferty, gentle and young, had explained to Bill that he had met the terms of the Church, agreeing to bring the children up as Catholics, but, not being a Catholic himself, the wedding would have to be held in the reception room of the rectory.

"I know, Father," he said. "I know."

He studied the room. It was great and dark and the furniture was as dark as death and all around the walls were the big paintings of good priests who had now gone on to their rewards. The names and the vital dates were on gilded plates at the bottoms of the frames.

"Yes, Father. I know."

The wedding was set for four and Bill had lunch with his

father and mother. They hadn't said much about the marriage. The older you get, the nearer to judgment you get. And the nearer to judgment you get, the more important religious conflict becomes.

"I hope you realize what a responsibility this is," his father murmured. "You're getting married and there will be children coming along. This is for the rest of your life, you know. I remember when I was married. I gave it a good deal of thought beforehand, as I presume you have." Bill listened politely. "You won't be as free as you have been."

"Yes, Father," he said. "I know."

At 2 P.M. he hurried upstairs for a bath. He undressed, opened a bottle of gin, and had two. He bathed slowly and dressed slowly. At three Charlie Johnson arrived. He had a snort and Bill said he might as well have one with Charlie.

At three a perspiring decorator was in the reception room covering the paintings of the priests with great flowers and autumn leaves. He was working on a small stepladder when a very old priest tiptoed down the stairs in cassock and biretta. He had known these priests. In truth he was now close to them.

"What are you doing there?" he asked softly.

The decorator looked around. "Covering these portraits for the wedding."

"May God forgive you!" murmured the priest, and the decorator found himself sitting on the lawn. Beside him were his flowers and his little ladder and around his head was a garland of autumn leaves.

Young Father Rafferty and the elderly housekeeper heard the commotion. They put their arms around the old priest and saw that his lip was set firmly against the dam of righteous tears. They talked to him softly and led him up to his room.

The decorator's assistant gave the alarm to the Elliots by phone. Mr. Elliott came downstairs with his face half full of lather and he creamed the receiver with it as he listened. All his blood vessels were popping as he yelled upstairs:

"Now listen, Genevieve! I've stood your religion for twenty-

five years and I haven't said a word but, by God, they are not going to throw my decorators out of rectories!"

No one answered. Everyone had heard Father sound off like this for every one of the twenty-five years and no one was going to pay serious attention to his petty bigotry now. What Mr. Elliott did not know was that Father Rafferty had invited the decorator back in, and, in youthful distress, had even helped the man set up his ladder again.

At four that afternoon, in the almost summery light coming through the starched lace curtains, William Wynne Wister was wedded to Margot Elliott in the presence of both families. At four-thirty a limousine whisked the bridal couple back to the Elliott home, where a reception was held for three hundred and fifty.

There was a receiving line and Margot and Bill shook hands with everyone. Behind Bill was a collection of potted palms. His friends kept a drink there, and as often as he emptied it they replenished it. His mother stood on the other side of the room, smiling and talking and laughing with old friends and not missing a drink that Bill had. After a while she walked over to him, smiling fondly and whispering: "Now don't you think you've had enough of that stuff for the present?"

He said: "Oh, Mother, no. I'm all right. Nothing is going to happen."

At eight Bill and Margot left. There was a limousine waiting to take them to the railroad station, but they knew that it was festooned with signs and tin cans and old shoes, so they sneaked out into another car with their valises and got away. It was Thursday, and the honeymoon plan called for staying at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York that night and Friday night. On Saturday they were to sail for Bermuda.

Bill has sneaked two quarts of champagne into his valise. They got to North Philadelphia station and it was quiet. They had fooled everyone. They stood on the platform and talked brightly of the wedding and the reception and the fine gifts.

Margot was remarking that the train they were taking to New

York was coming in from the West and their tickets called for a private compartment. At that moment about thirty relatives and friends came running and screaming down the platform, tossing rice and laughing.

The compartment came in handy. Bill had a few drinks in it.

## 1925

HIS FEELINGS on the morning after his wedding were that he didn't like it. He felt bored and let down. He had a hangover. Where, he asked himself, was all the hoopla, the spotlight, the toasts of friends, the glamor, the lights, the laughter, and the drinks? What had happened? The whole thing was ruined. Here he was cooped up in a room alone with a girl. A pretty and lovable girl, to be sure. But was that all there was to marriage? Was it for this that he had permitted himself to become a prisoner for life? Not if Bill Wister could help it.

He picked up a phone. He called Philadelphia and asked everyone who could to come right up to New York. Many did. And, magically, the rollicking laughter and the drinks were revived and it all became worth while again and Bill Wister was almost happy to be married.

## 1925

THE *Fort Victoria* sailed at noon. There was music on the dock and waving friends and the baritone bellow of the allashore whistle. Bill felt bad, but he stayed on deck with Margot, leaning and waving to friends and listening to the quips and laughing at them. The boat backed into midstream and swung her bows down the Hudson River.

Bill buttonholed a British steward. "When does the bar open?"  
"In an hour, sir."

Bill went forward on the promenade deck to their stateroom and helped Margot unpack. Then Margot went back with him to the bar and sat down at a portside table. They saw the Rock-

aways fade behind them and then the ship swung around and headed slowly outward, until those sitting on the quarter-deck under striped canvas could see the Highland Lights only as silhouetted salt and pepper shakers.

Bill began to learn something about Margot that he had suspected all along. She was a phenomenal sport. She could take bad treatment without wincing. She would always try to make the best of things. She would not run to her mother with complaints and she would not sulk. She had high courage and that certainty that some women have that, given time, they can remold their men to their own tastes. Margot was fine.

The white-jacketed Englishman came to their table and Bill said he would have a scotch and soda. Margot said she'd have the same. They had two. They talked about how grand it was to be on a honeymoon and especially on a fine ship like this with good times ahead and no worries. Bill studied the room. It had mahogany furniture and there were tiny drapes on the portholes and the place smelled of wax on linoleum. A couple walked in. The girl was blond and cute and slightly on the willowy, pale-skinned side.

"That's Morton Browning," he said, smiling at Margot. "He was in the class ahead of me at Hill."

He rose and said hello and Morton popped his eyes and hardly believed it and then he said: "Well, Bill! This is my bride. Alice, this is Bill Wister, an old school chum!"

Bill grinned and said: "Well, this is *my* bride!" They laughed and talked about coincidences, and they ordered more drinks. They had had two each when a short, dark young fellow walked in. He had an immature face and a girl who was as short and dark as he, and looked twice as small-townish. Morton Browning emitted a yip and locked his arm around the neck of the little man and it turned out that they were old friends. These new people were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Presser and they were on their honeymoon too. There were more drinks and a protracted discussion about how they would all go about getting the same table in the dining room and the girls began to chatter

and brighten and the boys felt better and it began to look like a tremendous honeymoon all around.

They all had lunch and afterward the wives wanted to play deck games, especially shuffleboard. Bill played to be gracious and then went into the bar with his bride and had brandy and cordials. He and Tommy Presser got very drunk and Bill drew a blank and went to bed.

He arose at ten. Sunlight was streaming through the porthole. He was trying to put his foot in one trouser leg and he knew that the boat was rolling. Margot rose with a gray face. She went into the bar with him. He ordered a whisky sour and so did she. Margot drank half of hers and felt sick. Bill called a steward and she was placed in a deck chair and bundled in a blanket. She dozed.

Bill did some drinking and soon he began to feel well. He went out on deck every time his conscience hurt him and he asked Margot how she felt. She said: "Fine. Just leave me alone." At lunchtime he had coffee. Margot couldn't eat at all and didn't try. Tommy Presser arrived at lunch drunk to the rafters. The bar stewards wore red ribbons around their throats with big medallions and Tommy swore that he would have one, even if he had to steal it.

In the afternoon the weather got heavy and the *Fort Victoria*, easily seduced, spread herself in the brine. At six Margot came to the bar. She looked and felt bad. Bill tried to introduce her to everyone because by that time he knew everyone.

He induced her to try champagne because, he said, it would do her a lot of good. Then he took her to the stateroom. She threw herself across the bed and slept. Bill tossed a blanket over her and left. At seven he came back to dress for dinner. He was fairly drunk.

"Is there anything I can do for you, dear, before I go to dinner?"

"No, Bill dear. But please see if you can get me some chicken broth. I may be able to keep that down."

"Sure thing," he said. "I'll be right back."

He went into the bar and ordered a drink. He met Andrew Cloud, a broker who was nearing fifty and was on the trip to recuperate from a hernia operation. Mr. Cloud was good-looking and had gray hair and a wife and three children somewhere in the Berkshires. They drank together and talked about the awful possibilities of a first-class hernia and then Bill went down to the dining room and had dinner.

In the stateroom Margot dozed and wakened, dozed and wakened. Finally she turned the bed lamp on. It was midnight. She sat up and waited. At one-thirty her bridegroom staggered in.

"Where is my broth, dear?"

For answer he held out a single long-stemmed chrysanthemum which he had lifted out of a vase.

"Look what I brought you, dear."

"But where is the broth?"

"Oh dear. I'm terribly sorry. It must have slipped my mind. What time is it?"

"One-thirty."

"Oh, darn it. Everything is closed up on shipboard now."

He fell into bed and didn't stir.

They disembarked in a tender and were driven to the Hotel St. George. They arrived just before lunch and Bill tried one drink and fell to pieces. He went to his room and tossed himself on the bed and began to moan and murmur. Margot became frightened and wanted to call a doctor, but Andy said that Bill was all right and the smart thing to do was to let him sleep it off. Bill returned to consciousness at dinnertime and felt even worse than he had in the morning. He sat with Margot and Andy and called the wine steward and ordered champagne. He was so weak he could barely stand.

"Now, dear," said Margot gently, "you'd better be careful. You'd better not drink too much of that stuff before you eat."

"All right, dear."

He ate somewhat and afterward they went into the hotel bar and met the Pressers and the Brownings and had more drinks.

The bar was rigged like a ship and had life rings and a helmsman's wheel and ship paneling. They had about seven rounds and then Presser said:

"Let's all get up early and go shopping."

The men pretended to be enthused and the women cooed.

"It's all right here," said Bill sagely. "But how do the women feel about it?"

The women said that they'd just love it dandy.

"Okay," said Bill. "Let's leave a call for eight and we'll all go together."

It sounded fine to the ladies, and the men called for more drinks. Soon May Presser was giving her young man the go-easy sign across the table and everyone saw it. Margot wanted Bill to go to bed. Browning's bride wanted Morton to go to bed. May Presser wanted Tommy to go to bed. Andy Cloud didn't want anybody to go to bed. Bill got drunk that night and every night he was in Bermuda.

Sometimes Margot got him into a barouche and he would sit, squinting and moody, bouncing over the rutty roads, looking vaguely at the very white little houses and the blue shutters and the poinsettias, ruddy still in the deadness of noon, and smiling at the chocolate children and listening to the buzz of flies disturbed in the road and the thin insistence of the bicycle bells.

Bill chartered a sailboat and had a case of cold beer put aboard. He and Margot sailed down to Hamilton Harbor and tied up at the Inverurie dock. It was a nice day and a fine trip but Bill thought the voyage would never end. He kept watching the Negro haul at the tiller and tack his way across to a spit of land and then back across to the other side.

He felt better when he got up into the Inverurie Hotel and met a foursome from East Orange, New Jersey, who had been on the *Fort Victoria*. They had drinks and he enjoyed the view from the terrace across Great Sound to the beautiful hotels on the other shore. To his left he could see a barren little island over which the longtails hovered. Neither he nor Margot dreamed that someday bigger birds—clippers—would come in

gracefully to smash the green of Great Sound into foamy whiteness and nuzzle close to that island for sustenance.

The East Orange gang had bicycles. They decided to ride around through Hamilton hell for leather to the beach on the far side. Bill wanted to rent a bike, but Margot said no. They took a carriage. The men had more drinks. They raced around the barouche and one fellow lost control and went over an embankment. They got to the beach and later, at Tommy Moore's, they bought seafood by looking into a tank and picking out something big and colorful and alive and pointing at it. The seafood man then took a net on the end of a long pole and identified it and chased it until he came up with it, dripping.

In the morning Bill went shopping in St. George with Margot and bought cloth for a suit and sweaters and other souvenirs. He didn't buy perfume. Margot checked the prices and said that the Bermudians were the most honest people she had ever known and that the native Negroes were extremely well mannered.

When the honeymoon was over they got into a tender and went out to the *Fort Victoria* and followed the reef for a while and then got outside and watched Bermuda fade in mist and grayness until they weren't sure whether they could still see the tip of the island or whether it was the blinking of their eyes.

Bill was sick beyond the help of liquor. The *Victoria* sailed into the tail end of a hurricane and she pitched low and took tons of spray across her bows and reared high and held herself there until the next green valley appeared. Bill tried scotch and tossed it. He spent the voyage in bed. Margot wasn't sick at all and, except for the roughness, enjoyed the trip and ministered to her husband.

When they got home they were invited to spend some time at the Elliott home and they accepted with thanks. Bill began to feel depressed again. He felt that everything worth while had ended. He was gloomy, even when he tried to maintain a front of composure and happiness before his family and friends. He felt like a very active man to whom the doctor has just said:

"Now, mister, you might just as well become reconciled to spending the rest of your days in a wheel chair."

## 1925

HE WAS GLAD to get back to work. The vice-president had a talk with him.

"Wister, we've been contemplating some changes in the New York division. The sales manager has left and his assistant has decided to make a change too. Now we're going to bring in the manager of our Chicago office, Mr. Joseph Johns, and he'll take charge. And we have decided to promote you to the job of assistant sales manager. We think it's a wonderful opportunity for you."

Bill beamed. "Thank you. It sounds very interesting. When do you want me to start?"

The boss smiled. "You just got back from a honeymoon. Let's see. Today is Tuesday. How about Thursday?"

"Fine. Fine."

Bill went home bubbling. His personal ideas of his own importance had just been confirmed. He tried to tell it to Margot in an offhand, deprecating manner but he couldn't contain himself.

"I've just been talking to the vice-president, dear, and I've been promoted to the sales force! If we had to move out of Philadelphia where would you like to live?"

He knew where she'd like to live. Margot wept. She said it was marvelous news and that she'd live anywhere with him. He pressed the point and she said New York.

"Well," he said, "meet the new assistant sales manager of the New York office."

Mr. Elliott heard about it and nodded approvingly. "It's just what you young fellows should do. Keep moving along. I think it's fine."

Margot said: "When do we have to go?"

"I'll tell you what. We have no place to live over there so perhaps you'd better stay on here a few days and I'll go over

and try to find a place for us. I'll meet the present assistant sales manager and try to familiarize myself with the office routine. I expect to be there in the morning."

He didn't really have to be there in the morning but it was a quick solution to boredom. New York also meant that he would be alone for a little while, away from reprobating eyes. He had no idea of spending a lot of time acquainting himself with "the office routine." He went to the office on downtown Broadway and spent a half hour listening to what the work was like, and then he left and went to a hotel in Washington Square. He got a double room and told the manager that his wife would join him in a day or two.

Then he went out and visited a few speakeasies. Intoxication stole upon him softly. So softly that in the morning he had no memory of getting back to the hotel. He went to the office again, and this time he got some speak addresses and left to try one. He left it with a fifth of gin in his coat pocket. He walked and stopped in alleyways for drinks. He got back to the hotel drunk.

The next day Bill stopped in the office again. He was thinking of the foursome from East Orange. The ones at the Inverurie in Bermuda. He asked the present assistant sales manager if he knew anything about Jersey.

"I live there. Why?"

"What is East Orange like?"

"Oh, that's a swell little town. You going to live there?"

"I've been thinking about it. How is commuting?"

"Rather easy. There's the D.L.&W. into Hoboken, there are buses into Newark. There's the tube train from Park Place. Oh, you'll have no trouble."

"Thanks."

He phoned the Elliott home. "Listen, dear. I've been looking all over for a place to stay and I think East Orange is the best place around New York. I understand it's a smart suburban town and it's not too far from the office. . . . Yes. Well, come on over on the ten o'clock train tomorrow night and I'll meet you at the hotel. The Woodwynd. . . . What? No, they spell it

with a *y*. . . . Yes. Woodwynd. It's down at Washington Square. You take a cab from Penn Station and I'll meet you at the hotel."

Margot got into the lobby with her baggage at a quarter of one. The clerk handed her a pen and she said she was Mrs. Wister. He looked up quickly.

"Oh. Oh, so you're Mrs. Wister! We've been expecting you for two or three days. We were beginning to think that there was no such person." He wasn't smiling. "I think you ought to know that your husband will have to get out by tomorrow morning. He's been coming in here drunk every night, Mrs. Wister. He hasn't been too noisy, mind you, but somebody had to be here to put him to bed. This is a family hotel, you know. People live here year in and year out."

Margot was shocked. So shocked that she said nothing and barely managed a backward smile as her bags were being carried up to Bill's room. After some knocking Bill fumbled out of bed and opened the door shakily.

"Oh, Margot. Oh, you. Huh. Must have been asleep."

He talked and tried to pretend that he felt fine and wasn't hung over. She took off her hat and coat and hung them in the closet.

"What's been going on over here? The clerk tells me that we have to get out in the morning. What have you been doing with yourself?"

Bill was suddenly scared. And nervous. He had drawn blanks each night and had no idea how he had come into the hotel or what he had said or done.

"Don't pay any attention to that guy, dear. He's an old woman. He doesn't know what he's talking about."

But he checked out in the morning. The manager said nothing. He was formal, totting up the bill and reciting the figures crisply. Bill was glad to get out of the place. There were two or three people standing in the lobby and he didn't know how much they knew.

He took Margot to East Orange, where they rounded up a

real estate agent who took them to Harrison Street and showed them a five-room apartment, fourth floor front, with elevator, doorman, and canopy. Bill said, "We'll take it." The agent was startled. So was Margot. She said she thought the place was divine, but a hundred and twenty-five a month? Bill smiled and suggested that she let *him* worry about that. The dazed agent took their orders for decorations and color schemes and told them how to get to Brick Church railroad station.

They walked it, feeling fine about the apartment. Then they saw John Lovering. He was a short, light-haired man and he had hung onto his Bermuda tan.

"Well, for goodness' sake! What the hell are you two doing out here?"

"We're going to live here."

"Where?"

"Harrison Street."

"Well I'll be damned. Come on. This calls for a drink. I was going to New York but that can wait. We'll go over to my place and celebrate."

They had a single drink. Then Margot talked of the pressing business of getting back to Philadelphia and getting all those wedding presents crated and sent to East Orange. Bill saw her off and then went to the office to see if he could find out what kind of a man the new sales manager was. He tried to appear to be only passing time with his questions, but the pertinent ones were "What kind of a guy is he?" and "Does he take a drink?" The answers, in turn, were: "Regular" and "Most indeedy."

A week later the Wisters moved into Harrison Street. It was a beautiful apartment in every way and the wedding gifts almost furnished it outright. Bill felt so successful that he went out and put a down payment on a Ford coupé. Margot didn't think it was a good idea, what with the hundred-and-twenty-five rental and all, but her disagreements were always soft and sauced heavily with love.

Joe Johns came in from Chicago. He was stocky and dark and

wore his hair parted in the middle and plastered back. He had a wispy mustache and a ruddy complexion and he looked like a man accustomed to getting along well with men. He greeted Bill warmly and said he had known the Wisters in Philadelphia and that he came from Germantown himself. He could mimic all the bosses of the company and had everyone in stitches. He drank a lot, but he was not a problem drinker.

Bill liked him immediately. And Joe liked Bill. They retained a bootlegger named Kelly who made two delivery runs a day. He had what he called the morning run and the afternoon run. If they phoned for "six of the white" that meant they wanted six bottles of gin. The "brown" meant whisky and the "smoky" meant scotch. The code wasn't designed to fool people.

Joe had a definition of a hangover: "When I get up out of bed I have six horned toads clinging to the wall of my stomach. They are tense and liable to attack one another. They have the faculty of knowing when liquor is coming down. Before I drink it they know it, and they relax partially and the head horned toad yells in basso stevedoro: 'Brace yaself, fellas. Here it comes!' I then drink about three quarters of a tumblerful of straight gin. The moment it hits bottom the whole six of them relax completely and murmur: 'Ahhhhh.'"

Bill decided to drink only on week ends at home. On Fridays he had a case of gin sent to the apartment and invited his Bermuda pals and their wives and girls up for the evening. They got drunk from Friday through Sunday. John Lovering had a girl who despised drinkers and tried hard not to hide it.

Bill made drinks in tall, thin, graduated glasses and half filled them with gin and then added the merest whisper of soda. In the morning he always had to have a few quick ones to kill the shakes. After a month he forgot his week-end resolution and began to sneak fast ones at the office. Then he went on to the point where he couldn't get to the office on Monday. He wanted to go because he knew he could catch Kelly on the morning run, but he was too sick. He would phone Joe and explain.

"I'm sorry, Joe. I'm awfully sick this morning."

"Ah! Horned toads!"

"Yeah. And they've had pups."

1926

BILL BEGAN to arrive at the apartment in a cab. He was getting into the habit of going directly from the office to a speakeasy. He would get home late and the cab driver would ring the bell and explain to Margot that her husband was downstairs in the cab stiff and that five-forty was due. She would pay it, tip the driver, and he would help Bill upstairs. Margot would nervously help her bridegroom to bed. She never complained the following morning or at any other time. She never staged hysterics or raised her voice. She cultivated few women friends and spent a little of her time shopping and a great deal of her time sitting waiting.

One day in early March she said: "You know, dear, I think I'm pregnant."

Bill looked surprised. "You think so? Maybe you better get ahold of some good doctor out here and let him examine you and see what's what." A moment later he smiled and said: "Oh, lots of women think they're pregnant and they never are." But he got a doctor for her and the doctor said she was pregnant. When Margot got back home Bill said: "That's wonderful, dear," and pecked her lightly on the cheek.

A little later he noticed that it was getting difficult to get his East Orange friends to accept week-end invitations to the apartment. The word had gone around that Margot was having a baby.

One night he was on a Lackawanna train homeward bound. He was drunk. He saw a pretty blond girl sitting alone in the front seat. He had seen her before. He got up, staggered up the aisle, and plumped down beside her. He introduced himself and she began to look out the window into the blackness. He talked, but he didn't know about what. Then he saw her get

up before her proper station and look around behind her with alarm and dash off the train. For months after that, when he had a hangover, he worried about whether she would get on the same train. He dreaded meeting her again.

Summer came and Margot got big. The doctor said that the baby would be born in September. Bill drank more. Most of his nights were blanks and that increased his sensitivity in the morning and the sensitivity brought on an increased desire for alcohol and that doubled the sensitivity.

In July she said that the doctor wanted to have a talk with Bill. So Bill sat fidgeting in his outer office waiting to find out what he could possibly want to say to a man whose only function, at the moment, was to become the father of a baby. The doctor wasted no time getting to the point.

"Now your wife is pregnant, Mr. Wister. You can't go on this way. It may affect her or it may affect the child or it may affect both. It is absolutely unthinkable that a young man like you can go on like this."

Bill was angry. But his tongue was politic. "Yes, Doctor. I think you're right. Perhaps I have overstepped the mark."

Then he took his hat and went home and tossed his hat on a couch and faced Margot and said: "You have a hell of a crust to give that guy my life history. And he has a hell of a crust butting in on someone else's business."

Margot's defense was murmured: "I didn't tell him about you, dear. He seemed to know everything. That's what amazed me. I can't understand where he heard it."

"That's what *you* say!"

1926

MARGOT LEFT East Orange the first week of September to have her baby in the home of her parents. Bill was sober the day she left, and he stayed sober until the baby was born. On the morning of September fourteenth, at five-thirty, Mrs. Elliott was on the phone:

"I just thought you'd be interested to know that things have started over here," she said. "You'd better come right over. It may be three or four or even five hours yet, but you'd better start."

He walked into the Elliott home just before ten o'clock. His father-in-law met him at the door. Bill looked worried but Mr. Elliott was smiling.

"Well," he said, "it's all over. You've got a fine baby boy." Bill stopped, slack-jawed. "He was born at eight-fifteen. We have notified your mother and father and they are on their way over."

"Gee," Bill said softly. "Gee. That's fine. How is Margot?"

"Just perfect."

He walked upstairs, shedding his hat and coat as he went. He got to the second floor and turned toward the front of the house. There were two rooms. In the first was an elaborate bassinet. He walked in timidly and looked into it. He grinned. He liked it. He honestly liked it. He had understood that babies were ugly red when they were born. This one had white skin with pink overtones and wispy blond hair and squinty eyes and very tiny hands clenched in the folds of shirt sleeves.

He walked out, almost on tiptoe, and into the front bedroom. Margot was there. And a starched nurse. He smiled vaguely at the nurse and walked over and bent down to kiss Margot. It wasn't a peck. It was a kiss. And his speech was framed. So he said it.

"I think this is fine," he said. "I think you have produced a wonderful baby."

Margot smiled a faint flash of a smile. "Well, dear, I couldn't have done it without you."

That was all. That was the descending curtain on three quarters of a year of involuntary effort—but effort withal—on the part of an attractive young woman. I think you have *produced* . . .

The nurse asked Bill to leave the room. He went downstairs and exchanged the happy homilies. Then he phoned Grandpa Wister. Old Grandpa was deaf and a little bit irascible. But on

this day of days his hearing was improved and his patience was almost perfect.

"Grandfather. This is Bill. . . . What? . . . Yes. . . . Oh, fine. How are you feeling? . . . That's good. Listen, Grandfather. We've just had a fine boy over here. . . . Yes, a boy. He weighs seven pounds four ounces. . . . What? No. Seven pounds and four ounces. . . . Yes, the mother is doing very well. He'll be called William Wynne Wister, Jr. . . . That's right. . . . What? . . . Yes. And I'll be over to see you soon. Sure thing. Good-by."

For the second time in almost twenty-six years Grandfather Wister shuffled to the great family Bible to write a name and a date. This time he did not scratch his nightshirt and go back to bed. He coughed a little and sat thinking about a certain young man and wondered about the nonsense he had heard about the young man and hoped that it wasn't true and, if it was true, he hoped that now this fine baby would clutch his conscience with tiny hands and hang on.

Bill sat at Margot's side for two days. He did the right thing and said the right thing. Not altogether for Margot's sake. It was for the most part to make an impression on the lovely nurse who seemed to be in the room all the time.

## 1926

**MARGOT FELT BETTER.** She sat up in bed and chatted and smiled and ate and wondered how to make a baby eat when he kept falling asleep in the middle of dinner. Bill decided that the Harrison Street apartment would be too small now. There were three of them and they would need a maid. So he hurried back to East Orange and found a house on Ivanhoe Street.

He didn't worry about the rental. His mother had been sending a hundred and fifty dollars a month and would continue to do so. He found a colored maid named Iola. She was middle-aged and fat and had a great heart. He installed her in the house and told her that Mrs. Wister and the baby would arrive

soon. Then he phoned Margot and said that the place was ready and that she had better take the seven o'clock train and he'd meet her on the Newark platform.

She arrived on time with baby and baggage. She searched up and down for Bill, almost weeping with desperation. It was cold on the platform. Finally she took a cab to the new home, introduced herself to the maid, changed the baby, gave him a bottle, and put him in his bassinet. An hour later Bill staggered in. His voice was sluggishly moist and he said he was sorry but he had been having a drink in a speakeasy waiting for the train when—bingo!—he looked up at the clock and couldn't believe that time had passed so swiftly. Margot smiled and kissed him tenderly and said that the baby was asleep.

Bill graduated into a new cycle. He got drunk for two or three days and then he got sick for two or three days. While drunk and semidrunk he went to the office with some degree of routine. While sick he couldn't do anything but lie abed and moan and ask for more sedation. At this point Margot began to phone her folks and his and tell them the truth. Often Mrs. Elliott would come over from Philadelphia and often Mrs. Wister would. When Bill came home he would be given the cold what's-going-on-here treatment. His rebuttal was to feel that he had been betrayed by Margot, but he couldn't very well accuse her at the moment, so he would go to bed and Margot would call the doctor.

One morning he came out of his misery and fog and said, "I think I'll go on the water wagon for about two months." He didn't want further accusations. It worked. Margot was fervently delighted.

Mr. William Wister became the model husband and father and the on-the-toes businessman. He went to Paterson and made about twenty calls in a day. The next day he went to New York and made about twenty-five. He felt good at home and he felt good passing speakeasies. He was a happy young man for two weeks. Then he began the calendar count. This consists not so much of counting the days you have been on the wagon as count-

ing how many more you must endure before you can get off. He checked off the dates like a convict. His work began to slacken off. He was irritable at home. Two weeks before the two months was up there was a birthday party coming up in East Orange. Margot couldn't quibble about drinks at a birthday party, even if it was two weeks out of line. But that wasn't near enough either. Unconsciously he began to cast about for valid reasons for drinking right now. Not next month. Or even next week. Now. Now. Now.

So he provoked an argument with the Philadelphia office, slammed down the receiver, and yelled, "Oh nuts! Everything's gone haywire," and went out and drank and drank and drank until he sprawled, gray-skinned and snoring, in a corner of a speakeasy.

After that he drank a little more moderately but he noticed that his old East Orange friends began to drop over to see Margot and the baby but they shied from discussing liquor and begged off when he suggested that he pour a round for all hands. It was impossible for him to have a drink with them.

Margot publicly gave him credit for one thing: "He's a wonderful father to Baby Billy. He does everything. He changes the baby, warms the bottles, sterilizes the nipples, thinks of the viosterol, gives the baby oil rubs—I'm telling you he's astonishing!" She boasted that he didn't even mind getting up at five forty-five in the morning to warm the baby's six o'clock bottle. Didn't mind? He'd have been angry if she didn't wake him.

That six o'clock bottle was, to Bill, a dream routine. He got up, put on a robe and slippers, and went downstairs to the kitchen to get the cold bottle. He went to the cellar and put the bottle in a pan of water on a small burner. He opened the furnace dampers and put fresh coal on. Then he sat down on an overturned peach basket in the bin and waited for the fire to come up. He reached down and picked up the fifth of gin that he always kept beside the peach basket. His throat felt raw. The stuff tasted strong and cut gouges in his throat and made him gasp and shake his head from side to side. The second one felt

a little better. So did the third. Bill got up and felt the baby's bottle. Too hot. He put it on a shelf to cool. While it was cooling he had another drink. The fire began to roar. He got up and turned the dampers down. He felt the bottle. Too cool. He put it back in the hot water and sat down and had another drink.

The routine never varied.

One morning after he had finished kidding himself with the baby's bottle he got dressed and hurried off to the office. He didn't usually hurry. But this morning his nerves were hanging out like busted wires and the bottle in the bin was empty. So in a trice he became Wister the businessman and cantered off to New York, hoping to reach there in time for Kelly's morning run.

Joe Johns was in his office talking to a girl. He looked up at Bill and waved. Bill knew without asking that Kelly's man had not arrived yet. Joe looked affably apprehensive, nodding politely to the girl and rocking back and forth in his chair, barely under control. It was a dismal, rainy day out and Bill wondered if Kelly's man might be late.

"Come in, Bill."

Bill went in and was introduced to Miss Bronson. She had horn-rimmed glasses and blond hair parted severely in the middle and her stocking seams were crooked. Bill wished hard that Kelly's man would please get the hell there quick. He noticed that perspiration dotted both sides of Joe's nose. Joe was explaining that Miss Bronson had just got out of college and wanted a job as their secretary.

"As I said, Miss Bronson," he was intoning, with his eyes on the double doors at the head of the office, "this is a sales office and Mr. Wister is in Paterson a good deal and I'm out of town quite a lot, so you'll just have to take over and become familiar with the files and perhaps even write certain letters on your own. This place is too quiet, I'll admit. Tell you what you might do—you might bring a book with you each day. Your only problem will be loneliness and if you can stand solitude I'm sure you'll like the job."

The girl smiled brightly. "Oh, I don't mind being alone a bit. In fact I rather like quietness. You see——"

Both outer doors crashed open and Kelly's man came running in, panting. He was carrying two heavy, twine-knotted packages and both were leaking badly. He was not a tactful man. He spoke out of the side of his gold teeth.

"Jesus Christ!" he roared. "The dicks is after me!"

Bill and Joe and the girl jumped up. They all looked behind him through the still-swinging double doors. The girl began to totter and sat down. The runner hollered: "Wheresa phone! Wheresa phone!" Joe saw that the gin was making big pools on the green rug. He took the packages into the water cooler. Bill stood near the runner and kept watching the doors. The girl moaned and rubbed her forehead. The man on the phone said: "Hello, Johnny! Listen. This is Eddy. I was comin' in off Broadway wit' a load and I pull up to the side of Worth and I jist got off with the two packages when I seen the dicks comin' at me. Yeah, yeah. I run into 291 so fast I slip on the polished terrazza and I bust evryt'ing. I get into the elevator and I'm up on 9 right now and they might bust in any second 'cause I leave a trail, see?"

There was a silence. Someone on the other end was doing a lot of talking.

"You want me to go on wit' the load? Okay, okay. If that's what you want, it's your funeral." He got up and fled.

Bill heard the runner. And he had heard other sounds too. From the cooler room he had heard first a dripping sound that rose in pitch as though something was being filled. Then there was no sound. Then he heard Joe cough. Then Joe came in, preening himself and clearing his throat. Bill knew without asking that he had strained the small pieces of glass out of the gin with his kerchief and the gin had filled a Lily cup and Joe now felt right.

"Now, Miss Bronson," said Joe in the manner of a father-confessor, "I hope this little incident hasn't upset you." The girl tried consciously to keep her eyes from the double doors. "This is

a highly unusual thing. Highly unusual. Isn't it, Bill?" But Bill was now in the cooler room. "Let us all hope that—harrumph! —it never happens again. We—uh—have this man every now and then when we—uh—expect some customers. You know how those things are."

Apparently she didn't. She took the job.

1927

THIS WAS a hot summer. The baby fretted and tossed in his sleep and men sat on porches in undershirts and drank beer and New Yorkers took the subway to Coney Island and many slept all night on the sands. Bobby Jones was belting every shot down the center of the fairways and making breath-taking putts and Tilden was slipping but he could still beat anyone in America and marathon dancers clung wearily to one another's necks for hundreds of agonizing hours. A man in Baltimore sat on a flagpole for twenty-three days and seven hours and Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray sat praying in the Sing Sing death house and the street cleaners of New York swept up two thousand tons of torn paper after the Lindbergh welcome-home parade.

This was a hot summer.

Mrs. Wister phoned Bill at his office to say she had made arrangements for him to see a Dr. Sigmund Wertenbacker, a psychoanalyst in midtown New York.

"A psycho-what? What's that? I don't want to go."

Mrs. Wister insisted that the doctor was going to help Bill.

"Yes, Mother. But how? I don't know what to tell the man. I can handle myself all right."

"I've talked with him about you and I want you to see him to please me."

"But why? What's wrong with me, Mother? You know yourself that I'm perfectly all right——"

"Will you see him to please me?"

He said all right. He phoned the doctor's office and a girl told him that the very quickest the doctor could see him would be a

week from Thursday. Bill said that his mother had arranged a quicker appointment. "A week from Thursday," the girl said. So Bill went home and told Margot about it, expecting her to see his point of view.

"Mother thinks I'm drinking too much and she wants me to go up and see this fellow. Frankly, I don't know what it's all about——"

"Well, dear, this thing *has* got pretty bad and you owe it to all of us to do something about it. After all, you do have a little baby——"

Bill kept the appointment. It was a pretentious duplex-apartment office. He was walked down a long corridor into a small waiting room and told to sit. He sat. He didn't study the pictures on the walls nor the magazines on the rack. He sat studying his perspiring palms and he felt nervous and self-conscious. He couldn't figure out what to tell the doctor because he couldn't think of a thing.

He heard a buzzer. A woman came in and took him through a maze of offices to the great front room. It was darkly furnished. There was a tremendous desk with a lot of carved elephants on it. The man behind the desk was tall and had a hunched back, a gigantic head, and a goatee. He was reading.

"Vell," he said. "Sit don, sit don." Bill sat. The doctor was studying a paper, obviously a background sheet entitled "William Wynne Wister." The doctor looked up. He stared at Bill.

"Vell," he said, clasping his hands on the edge of the desk. "Vun of dose dreenking fellas, hah?"

"I guess so," Bill whispered.

"You dreenk too moch, hah? You like to dreenk?" punctuated with great wagging of the head.

"I guess I do."

"Vot you dreenk so moch for? Dreenking is all ride. But you dreenk too moch. You should dreenk. But not dreenk so moch, yes?"

"Yes."

"You vill lie don on that sofa and you vill choost speak the thoughts that come into your het."

Bill felt ridiculous. He expected the doctor to ask him what was wrong with him. The doctor hadn't. Maybe the doctor knew what was wrong with him. If he knew what was wrong, then he knew why Bill drank too much. In that event he might tell what it was and prescribe a specific.

The doctor closed the blinds. Then he sat on a little chair behind the head of the couch where Bill couldn't see him.

"Vell, commence, commence."

"What do you want me to talk about?"

"But I told choo. Votever comes into your het."

Bill began to feel annoyed. He felt like getting up and running out.

"Close the eyes."

Bill heard the noise of traffic outside.

"I am walking up Eighty-fourth Street," he lied, "Now I am at Fifth Avenue. I get on a bus. A downtown bus. I am off the bus and I'm calling on a customer on Twenty-third Street. Now I'm back on the bus." He kept this up for ten minutes and tried to think out a tour of New York City. Then he slowed up and stopped.

"Vell! Go on! Vot do you theenk uf? Vot do you hear?"

He tried again, but no thoughts would come, and soon he was back on the bus. The doctor arose and opened the blinds. Bill looked resentful.

"This seems sort of ridiculous, Doctor. What has it got to do with my drinking?"

"Even if I tolta you, you vould not understand. You chust do vot I say."

Dr. Wertenbacker was being paid for a half hour. Twenty minutes had gone. He used the remaining ten to talk about how he had been down at the hospital and met a patient whom he hadn't seen in ten years and how once a patient tried to attack him near his home. Then he said: "Now you come here and see me at—at—at Thursday three o'clock."

"Well, is there anything I should do? Do I drink a little?"

"Nefer mind dot. You chust come back here. Better dreenk nothing."

"All right, Doctor. But will you tell me what this talking on the couch is all about?"

"You nefer mind vot's all aboud it. It's not your business vot's all aboud it. You chust let me worry vot's all aboud it."

Bill made six visits. He had been on the wagon a few days prior to the first visit and stayed on it the whole time. He began to reason that the essence of the treatment was some sort of master-slave relationship through which the doctor could force the patient not to drink through a fear of not obeying. On each visit Dr. Wertenbacker spent ten minutes talking about himself. He told the stories well and had a good sense of humor and knew how to laugh. Once when Bill had him in good humor he said:

"If I drink too much, Doctor, why do I drink too much?"

"Vell, I vill find out dose t'ings."

"What kind of things are you looking for?"

The doctor smiled paternally. "Vell, I might say you have an Oedipus complex."

"What's that?"

"Vell, ve vould interpret dot as meaning you vere sexually in luf wit' da mutter and dot you vont to kill da fodder. Dis, uf course, would be subconscious, uf course."

"That's ridiculous!"

"You see, you ask me; I tell you; and you don't belief me. I did not say you vere. I said it might be and I tolta you vot it means. Vot I tell you is true, but you don't belief me. . . ."

Bill laughed and left. He went downtown and met Joe Johns. Bill wasn't laughing any more. He was serious.

"Listen, Joe. I've been up to see this man six times and I still don't know what it's all about. I'm serious, Joe. I wish you'd come up with me once and meet this guy and tell me what you think."

Joe walked in with Bill the following week. The doctor was annoyed and made no effort to hide it.

"I am treating dis case. I nefer talk aboud my cases to anyyon except the immediate family and I vill not discuss it vit choo."

Joe got up to leave and so did Bill. They walked outside into the hot sunshine in silence. When they got on the sidewalk, Bill asked Joe what he thought of the man.

"I don't know," Joe said slowly. "With a head like that he must have a lot of intelligence. You know what they say about those big flat heads with the frontal lobes."

Bill phoned his mother.

"I'm terribly sorry, Mother, but I'm not doing so well with this doctor. We're getting nowhere fast. I don't know what it's all about and I'm quite sure he doesn't. I'm not going to see him any more, Mother. And, incidentally, what are you paying him?"

"Well, Bill, I'm sorry to hear this. What I'm paying him doesn't matter much. He generally charges fifty dollars for a half hour, but he gave me a reduced rate. I'm paying thirty a visit."

"Oh . . . my . . . God!"

## 1928

THE BABY'S first birthday had come and gone with no more than superficial recognition from Bill. He was now sliding from one drinking bout to another. In saloons he heard men talking loudly about Al Smith and Herbert Hoover and one man wanted to bet another a drink that General Motors would go as high as 350 before the year was out and another man said that someone had told him that the gangs were getting more brazen and that in the United States men were being taken for a one-way ride at the rate of one an hour.

It was spring and Margot had several undercover conferences with Bill's folks and her own. It was obvious that something had to be done—but what? Put him away? No one liked that idea. That was the one to save for last. Wasn't there a doctor somewhere who could do something? Give him some miraculous medicine or do something to make him stop before he killed himself?

They pondered and talked and worried, but there was no doctor, it seemed. And no miracle medicine.

Margot had a talk with Bill about his drinking. This was rare. It happened when he came in and she smelled gin.

"Look, dear," he said with strained patience, "Wertenbacker said it's all right for me to drink. I'm going to watch this thing. I'm going to have a few drinks at a time. It's green liquor, you know. Bootleg stuff. If Wertenbacker says it's all right for me to drink, as long as I don't drink too much, I can't see why you should object."

"You've never been able to do it before. I wish you wouldn't do it, dear. You've just got to lay off the stuff altogether."

"Oh, for God's sake! Can't I run my own life? I'm old enough to handle myself. I know what I'm doing."

The next night he came home drunk and he stayed drunk for three days. Then the liquor sickness hit him in the heart and the stomach and the head and his nerves begged for more and the liquor went down and bounced up again and he did his dying in bed instead of across the cool leather door of a Stutz. He recovered to the extent that he could fix his mind on a point and it would stay there. He phoned Joe. Johns said that there was a message from the vice-president of the company for Bill to meet him at his home in Philadelphia in the morning.

Panic flooded his belly and he knew that something awful was the matter. What could the vice-president want of him? Why the sudden conference? Why at the man's home instead of at the office? His nerves began to shred his mind and he accused Margot's family of getting in touch with the company and telling the vice-president about his drinking.

"If I get fired it will be all your fault!" he screamed.

He went to bed worried. He twisted and squirmed and worried and punched deeper holes into the pillow and then he became afraid to go to sleep for fear that he'd have another of those ghastly dreams. After an interminable time he fell asleep and the dream came again.

Bill parked his Ford somewhere near the office. He got out and

walked toward the building. The streets were empty. It was twilight and the thousands of windows in the skyscrapers stared red-eyed. He walked faster, frightened. He knew what was coming without knowing how he knew it. The street before him suddenly opened into hundreds of little streets, all cutting in diverse directions like the cracks in an ice pond. He walked faster and his heart pounded slower and heavier—a laborer with a sledge.

A figure was coming toward him. It didn't walk. It floated. It was a huge fat man with a suit of satin and a moose head. Bill tried to walk around it but the figure floated on a bias toward him. Then he saw, coming up the hundreds of little streets, hundreds of maniacal figures. Some were toothless crones and some wore clown suits and shoes that turned up at the tips, and some were fat men and some were running dwarfs, but no matter how hard he ran they all floated toward him and they all laughed hard and silently. They reached out to paw him and Bill screamed.

He ran into the office and found that the lobby was lighted with flickering gas lamps which threw long stuttering shadows. An old lady in a hoop skirt stood outside the office door. A dog with the head of a writhing snake came out from under her skirt. Bill ran inside the office and saw that it had been converted into hundreds of partitions and doors. He fought madly to get out and when he reached the street he ran for his car. The hundreds of mutely howling figures began to close in again, the darkness of night had come, and he couldn't remember where he had left the car. In the distance he saw a parking lot with lights over it on wires. He ran toward it, his heart booming in his ears, and then he saw that this was not the parking lot. A man who appeared to be normal came from nowhere and said: "I think you left your car in that lot over there." Bill ran; looking over his shoulder, he saw that the figures were closing in swiftly now and that he couldn't make it to the car. If he could only run just a little bit faster—just one more notch . . .

He got to it, hopped in, and stepped on the starter; the figures

were all over the hood and the running boards and on the roof, the motor was cold, and the car wouldn't start. He kept pressing and then the motor started but the figures had forced the windows down and now they were reaching in to get him. The car started off, jerking violently, and some of the figures fell off the hood. Bill saw a hill ahead but he couldn't find the exit and cars were now parked all over the lot. He threaded his way between them and then he rocked the car in an effort to dislodge the figures. He saw an exit light and headed for it at high speed, going faster and faster, on up the hill and over the top of it and down the other side, and then he woke up.

He needed a drink. He was depressed. But he had to meet the vice-president and it wouldn't do to have a breath. Margot said that she'd get breakfast, but he said he didn't want any. He was shaky and frightened and tense. When he boarded the train his mind was rambling and he felt like turning and arguing with people who bumped into him.

Mr. Leonard seemed affable. He opened the door and smiled and said: "Come in. Come on in." Then: "Sit down. Have a cigarette?" Bill felt that Asa Leonard was trying to be friendly.

"Now Mr. Elliott and I have had a chat about you, Wister. We've had a little chat and the company knows that you've been drinking too much in New York. We think you need a rest. It's been too much of a strain for you over there. I don't have to tell you that we're very fond of you. We like your work, and, as far as the New York office is concerned, there is nothing for you to worry about.

"Your family have some ideas as to a very nice place you might consider going to for a good rest. We think enough of you to keep you on the pay roll and we want you to take just as much time as you need to get back on your feet."

Bill felt relieved. The mystery had dissolved. It was obvious that Margot had complained to her father and her father had had a conference with Asa Leonard about Bill's drinking and Leonard had talked it over with the officers of the company. He began to sit back in his chair.

"Nobody knows a thing about this, Wister, except the president and myself. And, believe me, nobody will."

Bill spoke slowly.

"I haven't thought about it this way, Mr. Leonard. Perhaps you're right. I'll go home and talk it over with the family and make my plans. I don't think I'll be gone long. I'm young. And I'm anxious to get back on the job."

"Now, now. You forget about that. Get yourself on your feet."

He left and went to the Elliott home. He was angry. The family had betrayed him to his bosses. They had no right to do that. And now they were trying, through the boss, to railroad him somewhere out of sight. Mrs. Elliott met him at the door. He had more real affection for Mrs. Elliott than anyone else in the family.

"I think this thing is ridiculous!" he said bitterly. "I'm tempted not to go because I don't know what could be done with me. There's nothing wrong in the first place. I'm all right in every respect."

"Now look, Bill. Haven't I been a good sport to you? When you were drunk in East Orange, haven't I gone over and held your hand? This man I have picked out is clever. He has lots of new scientific ideas about drinking. Won't you do this little thing for me?"

He argued feebly. And then he said yes, he would go. Mrs. Elliott was so excited that she insisted on driving Bill to Dr. Barth's home immediately. They sat outside, and soon the doctor came down the steps and sat in the car with them. Mrs. Elliott told the doctor that this was Bill, about whom she had spoken, and that Bill was ready to go to the little rest home. The doctor was gray and wore pince-nez. He kept nodding at Mrs. Elliott and looking at Bill.

"I don't think there is anything wrong with me, Doctor," said Bill, "except that I drink too much."

The doctor smiled indulgently. "That's just the trouble," he said soothingly. "The reason you drink too much is that an appetite for alcohol is created because there is a chemical deficiency

in your body somewhere. You realize, of course, that each of us should have certain types of chemicals in certain amounts within the structure of our bodies. Well, we have recently discovered that when one chemical is deficient to a marked degree the subject often becomes a confirmed alcoholic. You replenish the chemical and presto! his troubles are over."

Bill grinned. He liked that thesis. It sounded good. To him it meant that all he would have to do would be to take a few pills and presto! he could drink to his heart's content.

"What are you going to do to me, Doctor?"

"Now you just come out to this little private sanitarium and you get yourself a good rest and then we'll test you and find out just what these chemical deficiencies are and then we'll counteract them. Now don't worry. We'll solve this thing pretty quickly."

"When do you want me to go?"

"There's no time like the present."

"I'm not going this morning."

"When then?"

"This afternoon will be all right."

"All right," said Mrs. Elliott brightly. "I'll drive you out."

The sanitarium was near Ardmore on the floor of a misty valley by a creek. It was called the Bright Side. There was a two-story lodge, curved driveways, a bridge over the creek, and then more buildings of varying size—some were bungalows—and over near the hill was a separate building. That was the laboratory. There was a tall man in a black frock coat pacing up and down the creek, roaring at the top of his lungs:

"So I said to God . . ." He looked at Bill. Bill waved a greeting. "I said to God, 'Whatfor you come wit' me?'"

Bill and Mrs. Elliott walked up the porch steps.

"Then the Pharisees came . . ."

Bill looked at Mrs. Elliott. His eyes glistened with suspicion.

"What kind of a place is this? I thought it was just a rest home."

"Bill, here's Dr. Marshall. Doctor, this is Bill Wister."

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Wister." Then to an attendant:

"Bring Mr. Wister's bags up, please." The doctor turned to Mrs. Elliott and dismissed her quickly. "We'll take good care of this boy," he said.

"Yes," she said, fumbling to leave. "Take very good care of him. He's a friend of mine. Bill, I'll be out to see you. And Margot too. Don't you worry about anything now. I'll take care of everything. Good-by. . . . Good-by."

Bill watched her go and felt his spirits sag as they had on that day long ago when he had stood at Hill School and watched his mother's trim figure fade toward the train. He was alone again, facing the unknown.

"Come on, Mr. Wister. I'll show you to number 8."

Bill followed the doctor across the creek. The tall man was now farther down, roaring his message to the water bugs and the nodding ferns on the banks. Bill looked backward. The luggage was not following. Number 8 was a two-story brick house not far from the creek. The doctor pointed up the hill.

"That's the lodge up there. We have a piano and ping-pong and everything."

They walked up the steps and an attendant with a ring of big brass keys opened the door. To Bill he was a blank face in a white coat. The doctor said that Bill would have to stay in 8 for a few days because there was no room in the other buildings. That, Bill knew, was bunk. This was probably the observation ward. Patients came here first to be watched and then graduated to the better-behavior wards.

The attendant took the new patient upstairs to a big room with eleven beds along the walls. Near the door was a big oak table with magazines and down front was a large bay window.

There were ten men in the room. The oldest was about seventy-five, the youngest a giant kid of twenty with a crew haircut and tremendous feet. The attendant said the kid's name was Charlie.

"This is your bed," he said. Some of the other patients turned to stare at Bill. "You'll probably be here only a few days. There are some magazines. Sit down and make yourself at home."

Bill didn't want to read. He didn't want to stay. He wanted to get outside and run down the road. He pretended to read. He sat at the big oak table, glancing at the pages as he flipped them and watching warily over the tops at the other patients. There was a middle-aged man sitting on a chair at the bay window. He sat stony still with his knees together and his hands clasped across his belt line. He never moved, never blinked, never spoke. His eyes were fixed on some point across the landscape and there they remained all day.

The husky kid, Charlie, paraded up and down the room. Then he sat down, clearing his throat and rocking back and forth. He tapped his big feet and he tapped his fingers on the arms of the chair. Then he arose and paraded again. He bent over, as though listening.

"What? What?" No one was near him. Then laughter came from his eyes and his throat. "That's funny!" he said, gasping. "What?" He cupped his ear to listen. The face relaxed from laughter and became callously hard. He jumped to his feet, ran to the wall, and looked at a point above his head. "Why, you son of a bitch! I'll kill you! I'll kill you!" Someone said, "Shut up, Charlie," in a soft way. Charlie sat down and drummed his fingers on the arms of the chair.

Bill was afraid. He had been sold into an asylum. These people could kill him. Any of them could kill him. He sat reading and thinking of the big ring of brass keys and of how impossible it was to get out.

The night attendant came in with dinner. Charlie ate everything, shoveling it into his face. The others ate well too, although some left vegetables on the plates. Later the night attendant came back and noticed that the very old man had been sitting on his bed ignoring the food altogether.

"Why Mr. Wasserman!" he said, surprised. "You haven't touched your tray!"

"Don't wanna eat."

"Why Mr. Wasserman!" wheedling. "You know what the doctor said. If you don't eat you'll never get your strength back,

and if you don't get your strength back you'll just never get home!"

"I don't care."

The attendant's attitude changed. The wheedling failed. Now he was tough.

"Cam on!" he said, scraping up a spoonful of carrots. "I'm through with this foolishness." He held the spoon under the nose of the ancient. "Now you eat this!"

The old man turned his head away.

"Okay. You want the tube? You remember last week when you got the tube? You'll get it again, by God! Now eat this food, dammit!"

The old man ate the food reluctantly. Bill, watching, had a definite feeling that he wouldn't get it down. He chewed long and laboriously, like a horse, and swallowing seemed beyond him. But in twenty minutes the attendant was scraping the plate.

"Now," the attendant said softly, "why didn't you do that in the first place? You're a nice old fellow and I like you."

At nine-thirty the attendant was back.

"Everybody to bed," he said. "Come on. Hurry up now. Come, Charlie." The kid came like an obedient Dane. He got his clothes off, the blankets were pulled down, and he was placed on the sheet. Then the attendant reached under the spring and pulled out manacles which he snapped on Charlie's hands and feet. Then he pulled the blankets up and tucked the boy in.

"Now, Mr. Morgan!" and the attendant tucked another man into bed. Bill felt as if he were watching animals perform for a ringmaster. Bill got into bed and others followed. No one bothered the man who sat unmoving at the window. Bill propped himself up on one elbow and saw that there was a watch and chain on the window sill and that the man had not been watching the landscape all day; he had been staring at the watch.

The lights went out and Bill could see the silhouette of the man at the window. He began to worry and feel very sorry for himself. Suddenly the man at the window sprang high into the air and before his shoes hit the floor he had his coat and vest

off and in a trice he had the rest of his clothes off, had put the watch and chain in his trousers pocket, and, leaving his clothes on the floor, was in bed under the covers, unmoving. No one else moved, so Bill assumed that the man did the same thing every night.

In the morning the monotonous clang of a bell awakened him and he saw the other patients coming to life and bouncing out of bed. Charlie bellowed hoarsely for the attendant to come and release him.

Bill was in that ward five days. Then he was transferred to another, nicer building, where a man could dress and go for walks. At first the walks were supervised. The patients walked in twos down the road with an attendant behind them. Bill knew most of the people who owned homes along this road and he was afraid that they would recognize him. When cars passed he hung his head. Then he looked back and felt that people who recognized him were staring in amazement through the back windows.

He had been at the Bright Side about ten days when he was sent to the laboratory to see Dr. Barth. It was a bright morning and he felt good. He passed a nurse in starched white. She was petite and dark and had an astonishing figure. Bill smiled. The nurse smiled. He passed her and looked back and saw that she was looking back.

Dr. Barth, in a white coat, was in the laboratory with Dr. Marshall. They stripped Bill and took a Wassermann, and a blood count, made chest and abdominal X rays, did barium fluoroscopic examinations, and kept him there most of the morning.

"I think from what we've already seen," said Dr. Barth, "we can start on about three to one and see what reaction we get."

"Excuse me, Doctor. How long must I stay here?"

"Oh, Wister! You've just got here and we've just begun to diagnose your chemical failings and now you want to know when you can leave."

"Can't you give me an idea?"

"Oh, three or four weeks maybe. Nothing definite. You really ought to be glad to be out here. This is a nice place. You have fresh air and good food and you can play ping-pong. You really ought to be satisfied, Wister."

"What does three to one mean?"

"You wouldn't understand."

When the tests were completed Bill went down to the main building and phoned Margot. He had stood all he could. Margot was always sympathetic. She'd understand. She'd send for him.

"Hello? Margot. Bill. Listen, dear. This is a terrible place. You have no idea what it's like. I've been cooped up in a building where there are a lot of crazy men."

"I'm sorry, Bill. I'm having a luncheon and there's a lot of noise here. I can't talk very well. But after all none of these places is a bed of roses. You must remember that you're out there to do yourself some good."

Bill hung up. He told himself that this was the end of the marital line. The hell with her. A lot she cared how he suffered in this nut factory. Well, he was glad she felt that way. There were other fish in the sea.

He went out on the grounds and strolled until he saw the petite nurse again. She smiled.

"Is there any place around here," he asked, grinning, "where a man can buy a cup of coffee?"

She stopped. "No," she said with a long *o*. "But I serve coffee in my quarters every morning after the regular breakfast."

"Oh, fine."

"My name is Blamey. Alice Blamey. I work in that building over there. I take care of four old ladies on the upper floor, and if you wish to drop over for coffee, come tomorrow morning about nine."

"That's perfect. I'm Bill Wister and I've just been transferred to that two-story building. It's going to be nice to have coffee with someone who can talk without grunting."

They both laughed. Bill walked away from her feeling like a single man again. Margot showed no interest in his welfare and

that left him footloose and fancy-free. He began to feel the upsurge of a romance in the making. It was a chance to play the gallant and make a terrific impression on a girl. He spent most of the afternoon and evening thinking about it and planning the pleasantries that would bring that smile to her face.

He wrote a note home asking Margot to please send some sports clothes and ties. Bill felt that he now had something to dress up for. As he finished the note an attendant came in and handed him a box of pills. They were black capsules about the size of .45 slugs. On the lid was written: "Take two after each meal." After dinner he took two but there was no effect. This, he said, must be that three-to-one thing.

In the morning he washed and shaved and spruced and went to Alice's quarters. She was sweet. She poured coffee and told him who was really who around the Bright Side and who talked a lot but didn't mean anything, and whom to avoid. He shewed with his eyes and his smile that she meant much more to him than an extra cup of coffee each morning. She said she thought he was attractive.

"But we'll have to be pretty careful," she said, pointing through the wall to the front room. "Those old ladies of mine talk."

Bill took two more capsules. They had no effect. He stayed awhile and then he left, walking on air. He would not have left the Bright Side at that moment for anything. After lunch he took two more capsules and went for a walk, thinking of Alice. He was down near the creek when his heart began to pound, black darts raced across the blue sky, and the landscape bounced up and hung tilted on the edge of nothing.

He staggered to a porch and sat down. "Jesus Christ!" he mumbled. "Where's Barth? He's made a mistake in that formula!" He forced himself to a phone and called Dr. Marshall. "You'd better phone Dr. Barth right away. This medicine has my heart going so fast I'm liable to have a stroke any minute!"

"Don't take any more," said Dr. Marshall softly. "I'll speak to Dr. Barth. We may have to reduce that formula."

The next day the lab attendant came over with a new box of

capsules. They were gray and black. The lid read: "Take two after each meal."

He showed them to Alice and she said: "Throw the damn things in the creek." Bill stopped taking capsules.

Ten days later the two doctors took more tests. They took new X rays, too, and placed them beside the old ones.

"Oh, Doctor," said Dr. Marshall. "Do you notice a slight change in the transverse colon?"

"Umm. Yes. Yes. I can see it"—pointing—"right there."

Bill said: "What are you trying to discover?"

"The only thing we're concerned about," said Barth, half to himself, "is this intestinal contraction."

When he left they gave him more pills. Bill walked down across the bridge and threw them into the creek. He began to see more and more of Alice Blamey. The visits had ripened into romance and Bill kept telling himself that he was single and that Margot was out of his life for good. He began to meet Alice after dark at a grove up the road. It was dark there and he made love to her and told her that she was beautiful. No one else mattered. This was the real thing.

One morning Dr. Marshall told Bill that Margot was coming up to visit. Bill felt sorry. He didn't want her to come up. He had no desire to see her and her presence would only remind him that he was married. Besides, suppose Alice saw her? What would she say? He knew that Margot was going to come, and there was no use wishing she wouldn't. She'd come up with her mother and sit and talk and talk and sit. So he began to hope that she'd arrive, stay a few moments, and leave quickly.

She arrived in the early afternoon with Mrs. Elliott. She gave him a big hello and a big kiss and wanted to know all about his stay. He took the women to a remote house where Alice wouldn't be likely to spot them. As he sat and chatted he sensed that both women were embarrassed. He asked about the baby and Margot said that the baby was doing fine. Well, that exhausted that subject and the three of them sat in moody silence.

"I hope you don't think I was disagreeable on the phone, dear," she said. "There was so much noise."

"Oh no," he said. "Don't give it a thought."

Margot sat clasping and unclasping her purse.

"Well," she said, trying to sound bravely bright, "I have some news for you."

"Yes?" he said, suddenly panicked.

She shrugged. "I don't know whether you're going to like it or not but I just found out that I'm pregnant again."

Bill sagged badly. "Is that so?" he moaned. "Well, that's fine. That's just fine."

He couldn't wait for her to leave. When she had gone he felt relieved. She had taken her pregnancy with her.

Bill stayed at the Bright Side for thirty days. Much of it was spent trying to make an "unusual" impression on Alice Blamey. He didn't write to Margot. He wasn't much interested in leaving the sanitarium. He had achieved a degree of importance there and he had no responsibilities. Unconsciously that combination fascinated Bill. Just as unconsciously he feared the outside world, which represented pain and misery and the gamble of being exposed anew as a drunkard.

One day, Dr. Barth smiled a large smile and said: "That constricted colon is all right now. You can go home. Tell you something, though, you really ought to lay off the liquor. It's no good for you at all. You see, Wister, you're one of those fellows who can't drink and you might just as well cut it out now."

Bill didn't like the speech. It was the nearest the doctor had come to trying to cure him of alcoholism and all it amounted to was an admonition he had heard countless times from countless people. It seemed pathetic to spend thirty days waiting for a speech like that. The attempt to cure alcoholism by rectification of an alleged imbalance of bodily chemistry had induced only dizziness and fright. He wanted to stay. He wanted desperately to stay. Hadn't he remained sober? Hadn't he had fun with Alice? Now what was to be gained by throwing him back into that confusing world of reality again? Did they want him to sit sober and watch Margot grow great? Did they want him to grieve because his mother worried about him? Did they want him to sit

in the New York office and pay no attention to the nearness of speakeasies? Were they nuts?

He packed. Margot came up to take him home. He said farewell to Alice the night before and made a date with her in Philadelphia for the following week. Then he said good-by to Dr. Marshall and thanked him prettily for all he had done. He went home with Margot. A week later he thought idly about Alice Blamey. He stayed home.

1928

BILL WENT BACK to the office determined to work harder. The vice-president had a benevolent smile for him. "Now, Wister. A lot has happened since you left." Oh, oh! Here it comes! "We're thinking seriously of dropping the New York office altogether because it's so close to Philadelphia that we think we can handle it from here. Besides, we'd like to have you close to us at the home office because then you can help us with the Southern stuff."

What Mr. Leonard was trying to say was that he wanted Wister where he could watch him. Bill began to feel a peculiar kind of claustrophobia—the kind that comes from being boxed in by those who love you. He knew that he would be watched all day at the office. When he got home Margot and her mother and his dad and mother would take over the job. It had already spread to his friends; he had been talking to one on the phone and the man said, "Why don't you and Margot drop up for a few drinks?" There was a gasp, silence, and the man said: "I forgot. You're off the stuff." At cocktail parties maids who came into the room with trays of drinks passed by Bill hurriedly. He knew he had been pointed out by the hostess. He knew also that Margot had not been able to explain his thirty-day absence; everyone knew that he had been in an institution.

He felt embarrassed and frustrated. What was the use? He went to New York and closed the office, got rid of the house in East Orange, and sent the furniture to Philadelphia. He took a

small house on Springfield Avenue near Crefeldt Street. He worked as hard as he could and stayed on the wagon for six weeks. The office gave him a sales territory from New Brunswick, New Jersey, on up through Passaic and Paterson to Albany, Watervliet, Syracuse, and thence to Rochester.

It was nice, but Bill felt the crowding of watching eyes, and he began to dwell more and ever more on how nice it would be to have a drink, the taste and tang of rye, the nostalgic smokiness of scotch, the perfumed bite of gin. He mixed them mentally, and he tried them straight. He relived the flash of belly warmth which follows that first big one, and he knew again the feeling of ease and well-being that comes with the fourth and the seventh. These thoughts crowded him closer than the eyes, and he invited their crowding.

A letter came in from a shirtmaking firm in Troy asking how much shrinkage the big dryers would cause to certain types of material. The question might have been answered with a letter, but Bill saw that it was the key to happiness. He told the office that it was high time he made the rounds, looking for new sales. He would go to Albany, then to Watervliet, to Troy, Syracuse, and Rochester, picking up sales here and there as he went. The office thought it sounded good. But, they asked blandly, how long would it take? "Oh," said Bill, "I'll do Albany, Watervliet, and Troy in three days, say; and go on up to Syracuse and Rochester and spend maybe three more days there. Say, seven or eight in all. I won't be gone long."

In truth he planned to finish the first three in one day and the other two in a day and spend the rest of the time in leisurely drinking. Not in getting drunk. William Wister never intended to get drunk. Intoxication always turned out to be the result of overappreciation and underestimation. He was going to stand in a speakeasy and drink carefully and slowly and enjoy himself and be rid of this taut feeling and do a lot of good business and come home. He knew that he had to do *some* drinking. And he also knew that he couldn't afford to be caught. So the business trip—the letter about shrinkage if you will—was the perfect device.

He was relieved and excited when he said good-by to Margot. His train arrived in Albany in the middle of the night. It was side-tracked there and Bill slept until seven. He got up, shaved, dressed, and smiled and smiled and smiled. There it was outside the window—good old Albany. He liked Albany. Albany took care of weary travelers. It had a speakeasy directly across the street from the railroad station. It had a small bar, not much longer than a man can reach for a drink. There were never many people in it, and a customer had a reasonable chance of being served before rigor mortis set in.

He took his baggage and his brief case, bounced off the train, and studied the skies. Aha, overcast! Can't do business on a day when the sky is overcast. Businessmen are morbid, irritable. Besides, this was Monday morning and any amateur student of psychology knows that it's bad to try to sell a businessman anything on Monday when he's neck-deep in week-end mail and problems which have hung over from Friday. No use going through a lot of lost motion ruining the company's chances of selling dryers by doing the wrong thing in Albany.

He stepped into the speak. It was seven-thirty and he hadn't had breakfast. The bartender looked at him. So did the two drunks wheezing against the bar.

"Tom Collins, please."

"Sure."

He waited. Nice place. Nice art on the walls. Good close-up of Mickey Walker on the back mirror. Or was it Mickey? Maybe it was Tunney. Well, whichever one it was, he had absolutely no interest in fighting, as either a spectator or a participant. He just wanted to wrestle a big, strong Tom Collins. He swallowed, thinking about it. Then it was set before him and he smiled appreciatively and pushed the five-dollar bill an inch closer to the bartender.

"Well," he said, lifting it, "first in three months."

One of the drunks whirled menacingly. He rocked toward Bill. The glass remained poised two inches from his lips. "Lizzen," the drunk said, jabbing an index finger at Bill, "we bin on 'is thing

three days. Yeah. Now wait a minute, wait a minute. Lizzen. I wanna know why, if you bin off it three months, why you start drinking at——" He squinted at the clock over the cash register. Bill couldn't wait. He was afraid that after all the waiting he might not get to drinking it, so he downed it, gulping greedily. "—why you start drinking at on'y seven-thir' inna mawnin'?"

The bartender pulled the man back to his place. Bill had two more. He was amused at the question. He left and went up to the Ten Eyck and got a room. The more he looked at the brief case the more he thought it might be a good idea to get the damned business over in a hurry and settle down to leisurely drinking afterward. So he went out and covered Albany in a hurry and went over to Watervliet and quickly sold a small, twenty-five-hundred-dollar dryer and went on up to the shirt-maker's in Troy and was astonished to come out with an order for a fourteen-thousand-dollar one. He sent the orders in to Philadelphia by wire and raced back to the Ten Eyck.

A kindly bellboy helped him get in touch with a samaritan who, by chance, had a fifth of gin for sale. He caressed the bottle and took a slug and felt the sharp sting of the stuff. He had another and another. Then he dressed and went out. He wanted to go to a speakeasy where he could talk to someone. Bill always had a fear, when he went out to drink alone, that he would fall and be taken to a hospital, or get rolled or hurt, or be arrested. To counteract that fear he always patronized speaks where he could talk to the bartender or one of the steady customers and establish himself quickly as a regular guy. Steadies usually protect transient drunks in the pinches.

He had a nice evening. There was soft music and a gay crowd and he was just beginning to enjoy himself when he awakened in his room. He had drawn a blank again and didn't know how he got in. He examined his wallet and found that he had spent or lost a lot of money. Then he discovered that he had lost his brief case. That was important. The order forms were in there and so were fresh order blanks for Syracuse and Rochester. Bill

gave five dollars to a bellhop and asked him to go around the hotel and to the speakeasies and inquire whether anyone had found a brief case.

It wasn't found.

He didn't dare wire for money from Albany. They'd know then. And he didn't dare admit that he had lost the brief case. He was nervous and hung over when he got on the train for Syracuse. When he arrived he got a room and wired for money. At least it would be coming from Syracuse, which would prove that he was really on his way. In his heart he knew that the plea for money would tip them off but he had to have it. There was no other way. He tried to pull himself together with a couple of drinks but he got drunk again and passed out.

He awakened feeling sicker. He phoned the room clerk and ordered him to disconnect the phone and to tell all callers that he had checked out. He stayed in Syracuse and got drunker and sicker. Several days later he staggered into Rochester and found six telegrams awaiting him. The first two suggested that he call at certain plants in the area. The remaining four demanded that he call the office immediately.

He phoned. He answered all questions truculently and said that he couldn't have done much in Syracuse because he had arrived the previous midnight. He hung up, worried about how much they actually knew. He tried to make business calls and hurried on to Rochester, then left and hurried home. He looked washed out when he arrived. The office had nothing to say, except with its eyes. Margot said nothing except for a single remark:

"Your voice sounded awfully thick over the phone, dear."

1928

BILL COULD no longer restrain himself. Around the time of his birthday he began to drink at home again. He didn't care what anybody said. It was his life, and he was going to lead it his way. He began to do more week-end drinking and more Phila-

delphia speakeasy drinking. He got into the habit of driving from one place to another in his Ford.

Late one night he left a downtown Philadelphia bar in a downpour. The rain was backed by a high wind. Bill gave a lift to a man at the bar, promising to take him somewhere up North Broad Street. He turned the windshield wipers on but they did no good. The rain was lashing the glass in great sweeps. Bill drove slowly.

Vaguely he saw a light ahead. He stopped close to the curb.

"There's a cop over there," he said. "Ask him what street this is."

The man got out, holding his overcoat around his throat. In a moment he was back.

"Fairmount."

"Fine." Bill tried to clear the inside glass of mist. The light switched to green. He started off and hadn't gone six feet when he felt a bump and heard a woman scream. He stopped and got out. A middle-aged woman with an umbrella held before her face had started off the curb. The front wheel had rolled over her instep and she had fallen back, yelling at the top of her lungs.

Fright sobered him. He turned to watch his passenger flying for his life. Bill lifted the woman to her feet with the help of the policeman. The umbrella was smashed. They carried her into a restaurant and sat her on a chair. The policeman wanted to call an ambulance but the woman wouldn't have it. She kept clutching her ankle and moaning that she wanted a cab, she wanted to go home. Bill traded names and addresses with her and told her the name of his insurance company. When she left in the taxi Bill smiled at the officer and said:

"Well, thanks. Guess I'll be running along."

"The hell you are. You're going to the police station with me."

"What for? I've adjusted everything with the lady."

"You're drunk."

"You're crazy."

"That'll be for us to decide. Come along."

A police surgeon was called. A lot of people stood around

watching him as he handed his driver's license to the lieutenant. The liquor began to hit him again and he thought this was a joke. The surgeon asked him to walk along a white line. Giggling, Bill bobbed and weaved and pretended to almost lose his balance. Then he came back down it like a ballet dancer on a slack wire, with his hands held high and his knees bent, concluding the performance with: "Well, boys, how'm I doing?"

"Dandy," the surgeon said. "I pronounce this man intoxicated."

When they booked him he began to get panicky. They weren't fooling. They were going to put him into a cell. He didn't want to go to jail. He didn't want to spend one minute in jail. He wanted desperately to go home and he asked if he could phone his wife. The lieutenant said sure, right over there.

They listened while Bill phoned. He begged Margot to come right down and get him out of this awful mess.

"No, Bill," she said. "I'm not going down there on a night like this. And I don't think anyone else will. You'd better stay there and sleep it off."

He looked around. Everyone was listening.

"All right, dear," he simpered. "If that's the way you feel . . ."

They took him to a cell.

## 1928

BILL WAS HOME and very sober in early October. The baby was imminent and he devoted more attention to the details than Toscanini would have given to the string section at a rehearsal of "Dance of the Hours." He watched Margot carefully and ran for glasses of warm milk, ordered a fine doctor and a fine room at the Chestnut Hill Hospital, and made certain that he had the very best nurse available.

He took Margot to the hospital shortly after midnight of October twelfth. There seemed to be plenty of time. The doctor had started for the institution. Then Margot unconsciously double-

crossed everyone. Her face became gray and she dug her fingernails into Bill's wrist. Her father arrived and became very nervous. The baby was almost born when the doctor got there.

"You're a little early for the christening," Mr. Elliott said.

It wasn't the doctor's fault. It wasn't Margot's either. Or anyone else's. The baby was a healthy boy and his mother wasn't hurt. Bill phoned Grandpa Wister that Charles Frederick Wister, named after both grandfathers, was here.

Then Bill went home and hired an Irish maid named Minnie, who promptly spoiled Billy just as Julia had once spoiled Bill. Two weeks later, when Margot came home, Bill felt a relaxation of crisis and went out and got drunk. He got drunk again. And yet again. He came to on one occasion in the Luxor Baths in New York, being pummeled by a masseur on a table. He had no money. He phoned Philadelphia and got bath bail money. He went home and made promises. Fine promises right from the heart. He meant to keep them.

But he'd take a few. And the few gave him the courage to hop a train for New York. And the big town meant that he was under no supervision. And that, in turn, meant more drinks. And more drinks always meant drunkenness, a total blank, and, after the return of consciousness, a wave of panic.

He was out of hand.

## 1929

HIS MOTHER tried to talk to him about it. He flew into a defensive rage and refused to discuss it. Margot tried and got the same reaction. Friends and family attempted to sort of sneak up on the subject in a left-handed way. But all they got in return was abuse.

The office saw him in spurts. Sometimes he worked a whole week without missing an hour. But most of the time he went to New York over the week end and didn't get back to the office until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. One night in Philadelphia, in front of the Princeton Club, he stepped into a cab on

one side and fell out the other. His face was deeply lacerated and the driver wanted to take him inside the club for treatment.

Bill refused. When he got home Margot called her father. The following afternoon Mr. Elliott took Bill to the Moorestown Rest Home. He didn't resist. He was in a sick daze. It was a late afternoon in February and Mr. Elliott was talking about how some Democratic congressman had risen to ask just how much the inauguration of Herbert Hoover was going to cost the taxpayers. Mr. Elliott couldn't understand why anyone cared what it cost.

"We are living in the greatest era of prosperity the world has ever known. And besides, we have so much money right now that we have to lend a few billion here and there to keep it moving."

Bill didn't know what Mr. Elliott was talking about but he nodded. Slumped beside his father-in-law, he stared glassily at the big gate and the gravel drive before the sanitarium. The place was a big, well-kept, Tudor type of home. Behind it was a smaller place and acres of rolling grazing land. He was taken inside and introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Boyce, who looked like kindly people. They showed him through the great beamed living room and to his room directly across the hall, in front.

He was introduced to a young, meek, and efficient nurse named Herb, who would take care of Mr. Wister and would sleep right outside his window on the front porch. Mr. Boyce said that he had fourteen patients at the moment. Bill nodded dazedly and wished that they would all go away and stop looking at the bandages on his face. If only people could learn to leave him alone!

Mr. Elliott said for Bill not to worry about Margot and the children and to take good care of himself. Bill said good-by and thanks for everything and then he went in and fell across the bed and dozed. Herb sat for a while reading. When night came Herb ate and then came back and read some more. Later he took three heavy blankets and slept on the porch. Bill sat up twice in the night to ask feebly for water. Herb got it.

In a week, when Bill felt better, he played handball with Herb and tried short jogs down the road. He became friendly with his

nurse and with two other male patients. The foursome had long talks in Bill's room. That was when he found out that the room was costing his mother a hundred and fifty dollars a week. It didn't make him feel bad.

Dr. Tom Sweeny, the head doctor, came. He was tall and gray and suave and fat. Everyone liked him. He introduced himself and asked Bill how he was getting along.

"Fine. Just fine."

"Like it out here?"

"About as well as any man could like a sanitarium."

"I hear you've been out for a drive and you've been playing a little tennis."

"That's right."

Bill liked the doctor but he was bored with him. He turned a small part of his mind on to automatic and used the rest of it to think of pleasurable things.

"The thing for you to do is to get as much outdoor exercise as you can. Get yourself built up and you'll find plenty to do. There's a ping-pong room downstairs and you can play cards in the evening."

Bill knew all about it. He also knew that the doctor came once a week to look at his patients. He knew a lot of dull things.

"I was talking to your wife yesterday. Fine girl, Wister. Fine girl. You have two boys, I understand. That's fine. Now what do you suppose makes you go on these—uh—sprees? After all, you have this lovely wife and these two children. It's not really their fault that they're here. Before very long they'll be looking to you for guidance. You know what a father means to two fine little boys, don't you?"

Bill wished Dr. Sweeny would go away. He didn't want to think of being married, and the responsibility of fatherhood was a forgotten toothache.

"I don't know what happens to me, Doctor. I certainly don't mean to hurt anybody and I don't start out to get drunk."

"Yes. Well, I think you ought to give this a lot of thought. You have this responsibility."

"I will, Doctor."

"Well, I'll be out soon." He fixed his gloves, carefully stroking the fingers on. "Your—uh—mother," he said. "You know, your mother is under a great deal of financial strain at this time. As you know"—nodding at the room—"this is a very expensive suite. I've told her that we'll just move you to a front room upstairs. It's a fine big room. Is that—uh—agreeable?"

"Of course. Of course. Certainly. I'm sorry. I didn't know that the room was available."

It certainly wasn't agreeable. Bill felt demoted. He had had the best room in the house and now he was moving upstairs to a cheaper one. What would people think? But he moved upstairs anyway and he had breakfast in bed. Every afternoon at four he had two men squirt hoses on him in the downstairs hydrotherapy room and he got a lot of extra little privileges and dismissed Herb. He felt fine. He no longer felt like drinking or thought about it. The initial nervousness had disappeared and he needed something—one more little thing—to make him content.

He was reading a magazine when it passed by. It was a nurse. She was short and dark and had heavy natural eyebrows and thick hair. She wore a tailored tweed suit and sports shoes. She had a form and an insinuating walk. It took Bill an hour to arrange for someone to introduce him to Miss Louise Ralson. She had a patient, Miss Pickney, who had a mild nervous disorder and pimples. From the look of the pimples, they could have been a causative factor.

The romance began at once. They talked awhile about Philadelphia and uttered inanities like "Of course you know Bill Nichols? You must know good old Bill! You don't? Well, that's funny because he wears his hair almost exactly the way you do and he's lived in Philadelphia all his life and . . ."

Bill slipped a note into her hand. She giggled and closed her little fist over it. She walked away and read it. "You're the best-looking thing I've seen in years," it read. "I'm glad I'm here now." She returned, blushing a little. Later she slipped a piece of paper into his hand. It read: "I think you're attractive too."

At first he didn't see Louise often. He was aware that most sanitarians have a deadly fear of any nurse-patient relationship and he was still under close observation. He noticed that Louise drove her pimple patient around in a nice car. So he began to go for walks with a patient, and as they left he'd say loudly: "Let's walk up the west road and around the bend and back." An hour later, as he expected, the Cadillac was purring up behind them and Louise would honk the horn, looking surprised, and offer the men a lift back to the sanitarium. Bill would smile and say he'd be grateful. He was playing his cards well. He had wanted to know if she was interested. Now he knew the answer.

Later Bill discovered that Louise went driving with a middle-aged patient who owned a Packard. His name was Ed Markel and he was forty and rich. He barely said hello to anyone except Louise and Bill knew immediately that this was to be the competition.

Louise stopped in one afternoon for a chat and Bill showed her a pamphlet. "How do you like that car?" he said nonchalantly, as though he weren't quite sure he thought it was good enough. "It's a Stutz Blackhawk." The car was black, trimmed with nickel, and had red wire wheels and black leather upholstery. There were big dials on the dashboard and all handles had inlaid mother-of-pearl tops. It was the first no-back car in the world. The no-back was a safety device, a ratchet which, when the car stopped, dropped down and jammed the transmission so that the vehicle could not slip down a hill or mountainside. The car had a tan canvas top and racy-looking doors and windshield.

Louise gasped. "Bill, that's the most beautiful car I've ever seen."

That was what he wanted to hear. Now the problem was to get the car. He had a small stock account in Carpenter & Company, but the amount would not buy a Blackhawk. In truth, each morning at ten he phoned Carpenter and asked for Miley, his account man. He left the phone-booth door open and spoke loudly. Miley must have thought he was crazy.

"Listen, Miley. This is Bill Wister. How is A. T. and T. this

morning?" Then, wisely: "Ah-haaa! How is Anaconda? . . . You don't say! All right, Miley. Tell you what. Sell that fifty Electric Bond and Share at the opening market and buy me two hundred Stutz Motors and stick the rest away for the time being."

It made him one hell of a guy around the sanitarium.

He never phoned Margot except when he wanted something sent over. "Will you send over my yellow sweater and my black checked sports coat? How are the children? Good. . . . I'll be out to see you one of these days, dear. . . . Oh, fine. But be sure to let me know when you're coming. I may be out for a walk or something."

His mother came out. Usually she arrived with Aunt Agnes or some other relative, but this time she came out alone. If she was at all nostalgic en route she could have dwelled on nothing more pertinent than the time Bill wanted a two-wheel bike.

The day was unseasonably warm and they sat on the porch.

"I'm getting along pretty well here, Mother. And I'm allowed out and sometimes we go for long walks and sometimes we are invited to nice homes. Now you know what transportation is like out here. It's bad. Very bad. I was thinking seriously of buying a car. I've got a little money at Carpenter, of course. Not much. Not nearly enough. Do you think you could help me out a little until I get on my feet again?"

"Oh, it's possible, Bill. I don't know. How much will this thing cost?"

"Well, I'm not going to buy a cheap car. They don't stand up. You know that. So I thought perhaps I'd get a really decent car. Something that will last for years."

In these situations Mrs. Wister was pathetic. Her feeling was that she was trying to help him get well and that part of the treatment consisted of capitulating to his demands.

"It will cost about three thousand, Mother."

He waited. On her answer depended the campaign. She could make it very difficult or very easy.

"Well, I'll see what we can do."

He knew that he was practically driving a Stutz Blackhawk.

Now the problem was smaller: how to make her pay more of the price than she had anticipated so that he could keep "operating money" in his hands. He left that for Act II. She kissed him good-by and the moment he saw his mother disappear he hurried inside and phoned the Stutz agency in Philadelphia. The salesman was polite.

"This is William Wister. . . . No. Doubleyou-eye . . . yes. My home address is at 119 West Springfield Avenue. I'm very much interested in your new Blackhawk. The four-seat job with the tan top. . . . Yes. I'd like to have it in black leather. Can I have delivery on it right away? . . . You've what? Oh, just started to manufacture them. . . . Certainly, I can wait. But I'm not going to wait forever. . . . How long? . . . Thirty days! Can't you do a little better? . . . Yes, I'll drop in and place an order. I'm at Moorestown right now with friends. I expect to be in town, say, Saturday. I'll see you then."

The following morning he phoned his mother.

"Mother, have you come to any decision on the car?"

"Well, your father and I have been talking this thing over and we both feel that the practical thing for you out there is a Ford."

"A Ford?"

"Yes, Bill. You can get along very nicely out there with one. Buy a new Ford."

"Well, I don't want a Ford! It is *not* the car for me out here! And if that's the way you feel about it, Mother, I guess there's nothing I can do about it." Sadly: "I'll just have to turn elsewhere for help, I guess. I'm very disappointed."

"We must all expect disappointments in life, dear."

"I don't mind the disappointments but I don't see any fun in promoting them."

"I haven't promoted anything, Bill. Now look. If you really feel that you must have this car, I am not in favor of it, but I happen to have a little stock downtown which can be switched around somehow and—well, I'll lend you the money."

The truth was she couldn't bear to have him go "elsewhere." That was why he had threatened it.

"When can I get the money?"

"Have patience. I've got to go and sell some stock."

"Friday, say?"

"I don't see how. I've got to sell the stock and then get the money to you."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Mother. I was going into town Friday but I'll postpone it until Saturday. Will that be all right with you?"

"That's fine, Bill. I'll put the check in the mail Friday at the latest and you'll get it Saturday morning sure."

"Thanks a lot. I appreciate it very much."

"Now see if you can't get yourself together out there. Settle this problem once and for all."

"Don't worry, Mother. I'll be all right."

The check came Saturday morning. It was for the full three thousand. He hurried to town, had an order drawn up, signed it, stunned the salesman by paying cash in full, and then demanded quick delivery.

"I want the first or second car off the line, understand?"

He did. Bill went back and fretted and phoned and drove the agency mad with demands for his car. He even phoned the railroads. This went on for five weeks. It got so bad that the dealer began to make progress reports.

"Mr. Wister? Your car is now on the B. & O. . . . Yes sir. Car number 09428751. It cleared through Wheeling exactly one hour ago and should be here in forty-eight hours. I'll phone the moment it arrives."

Bill drove the gleaming goddess up the circular gravel drive. Everyone stared as he parked it and went nonchalantly up on the porch. Louise breathed: "Bill, it's just beautiful!"

"Yeah," he said, walking away from it. "I think it will do. Needs a few adjustments here and there. But it will be all right, I guess."

After that he often drove Louise and a few friends into town. They went to the Arena on Market Street to see Jimmy Londos and Toots Mondt and Strangler Lewis and other wrestlers. Louise

now knew that Bill was married and had two children. But, when they kissed, Bill implied that he would free himself somehow. He skirted the edges of the word "divorce" without saying it. The love affair was intense when Dr. Sweeny came into Bill's room one morning and sat at the foot of the bed.

"Bill," he said, "I've been giving you a lot of thought lately and I think you've got about everything you can expect from Moorestown. You have a good job waiting and I know you're anxious to get back home to your wife and children. It is my opinion that it's time for you to try your wings. How do you feel about it?"

Bill felt bad about it. He had an attractive girl, love, prestige in the sanitarium, a fine car, a little money, and no responsibilities. The last thing in the world he wanted was to get out.

"I'll tell you, Doctor. I want to get rolling, of course. I've put in a couple of months here and, while I feel much better, I'm not quite sure of myself on this matter and I think I ought to stay on, say, another month, as a safety factor."

The doctor coughed and fluttered his hands.

"Well now. Since you feel that way about it I don't really think you should leave. I'll talk it over with your family and I think you'd better plan to stay here another three or four weeks. At that time we'll see how things look."

That night Bill met Louise down the road where there was a big tree and a rustic bench. His technique was gallant and flawless. His manner was intimately affectionate and yet his kisses were sparing and each one plainly promised that greater things were to come. He was the restrained lover, the thoughtful cavalier who worried if the girl felt chilly and who always mirrored the lady's mood. He gave the impression that she was one of the two smartest persons in town. He loved to send flowers and when the girl cooed he'd say: "Oh, those pathetic little things! I just couldn't get anything but short stems."

Louise didn't know—any more than Bill did—that women were awfully important to him. Not merely for love-making. That was almost always an investment. The dividend came when he

needed nursing. Julia was the first. And then his mother. All the others were modifications of his mother, primed to a point so that they would help him up when he fell.

The three weeks passed quickly and when the time came to pack and go home Bill felt depressed again. He threw the luggage into the back of the Stutz and said good-by all around. The farewell to Louise was formal because their romance was secret. Besides, he had already said a warmer, private good-by and made a date for the following week in town.

Then he drove home, and when he got there Margot came out on the porch and looked at the ruddy glow of his skin and the fine clothes and the glittering car.

"Well, Mr. Astorbilt," she said. "You're home."

## 1929

BILL didn't drink for six months after leaving Moorestown. He resigned his job and said he was going into business for himself. The family walked on tiptoe across his world, fearful to mention his long-term sobriety and yet beaming with happiness. Margot was afraid to mention it at all. His mother once blurted: "You're doing very well, Bill. Keep up the good work."

He met Louise secretly three or four times a week. Sometimes they went driving in the Stutz. Sometimes they met at her apartment. She kept a flat in town and commuted to the sanitarium. Then he got a job with an air line and took flying lessons and worked—sometimes at night—in the sales department. He enjoyed meeting old friends who said: "My, don't you look well!" Even Louise, who didn't drink at all, never mentioned the subject to him.

Then boredom came back to roost on his shoulder and preen its feathers. He was irritable and disagreeable. When he saw people drink he felt envious and miserable and tense. He became overaffectionate and overindulgent with the children and everything Margot tried to do for him was annoying. He spent a lot of time thinking about the grand old days, the RAF, gay parties, old tunes, New York—yes, even Cody wrung a nostalgic smile.

Then it came. Bill drove to Gus's at Fifteenth and Pine. It was a downstairs and upstairs place. There were tables downstairs and a living room, dining room, parlor, and a few small private dining rooms toward the kitchen. Upstairs were booths and private dining rooms. The food and the drinks were as good as anyone could get in Philadelphia. It was one of the few places where a customer could buy a pint and where the proprietor could match the customer's breath with his own.

Bill felt no hesitancy when he got inside; none of this maybe-I'd-better-think-this-over. He was beyond that. He was elated. He felt fine before the fact. He went to a downstairs dining room at the left and ordered a pint of rye and some water. The first two were a little raw. After that they went down swiftly and warmly and he dispensed with the chaser and drank his drinks on the hoof. He was feeling very elegant indeed and not a bit drunk when the waiter stepped into the doorway.

"Mr. Wister. The boss says to tell you that there's a man from Hill School."

Bill leaped to his feet. "Who the hell is it?"

"His name is Don Marks."

"Don Marks! Well, bring him in for Christ's sake! What did you leave him outside for?"

Don was short and squat and had a shy smile. Bill made a big whoop-de-do about him and they sat down and talked about old classmates and of how the Freight Jumpers Club should have been tossed out of Hill the day each one entered. Bill said he felt a little sorry that he hadn't tried hard enough at Hill because he realized now that it was a truly great American institution and he might have learned a great deal if he hadn't squirmed so hard trying to get out of it. The conversation was full of "Let's have another" and "What the hell you been doing with yourself?" and "Guess who I met last week—you'll die!" Both bragged of how successful they were. Don said: "You're still married, hey?" And Bill waved his hands and said: "Oh no. That's all washed up. Completely over with."

"You don't say! What the hell happened?"

"It's a long story, Don. One of those things. You know I don't usually talk about these things, but I'm very much involved with a fine girl. She's beautiful of course. I can tell you in confidence that I'm going to marry her. That reminds me. I promised to call her at eleven and it's eleven-thirty. Excuse me a minute, will you, Don? Be back in a shake."

Bill phoned Louise. For the first time she mentioned liquor.

"Are you drinking, Bill?"

"Oh, I've had a few, sweetie. Everything is under control. Really. I'm going home in a few minutes."

"Well, be careful. Don't get into any trouble."

He went back to the table to more drinks and more conversation and after a while the drinks and the talk were both weak and far away and then they became faint and sleep was coming.

"Hey, Wis! Come on, Wis! Gus wants to close up. Time to go home."

Bill arose and fumbled for his hat.

"Lissen, Don. Come out my place for a night. Glad havya, kid. Lotsa room. Lissen, Don, o' boy. You better drive a car."

Don drove and Bill passed out. He didn't remember getting into the house. Don found the spare room and Bill fell into bed. In the morning Don got up first. He went downstairs, the cook got a nice breakfast for him, and he had a pleasant conversation with Margot and Mr. and Mrs. Elliott. He left before Bill came down, sick and nervous and on the defensive.

"Hello, everybody."

Margot turned her head. The in-laws stared stonily. He sat and sipped coffee.

"Where's Don?"

Margot did the talking. She talked quietly, without expression.

"He's gone. He told us some very interesting stories, Bill. One was about this lady friend of yours."

"What lady friend?"

"Don't *you* know?"

"No."

"I understand you're going to get married."

"I don't know what you're talking about. Even if it were true, this is certainly no time to talk about it."

He had a defense he had used successfully many times. Get angry. Get good and angry. It stops the scene, halts unspoken questions, and throws the aggressor onto the defensive. He arose and stomped into the living room. They followed. Mr. Elliott tried to be delicate and considerate.

"It seems that you phone this girl at her apartment, Bill, and you—uh—go motoring with her."

Mrs. Elliott said nothing. Bill sensed that, of them all, she was his true friend, the great understanding heart.

"Well," Margot said. "Is it true? It certainly sounds true the way Mr. Marks tells it."

It looked as though the father and daughter might press the point. In that case anger from him would mean little. In any case this nerve-provoking scene had to be ended at once.

"Yes, if you must know. It is true. Every word of it. And I'm getting the hell out of here."

Margot began to show signs of nervousness. She sat staring at him and he was afraid that she might think he was saying this to end the argument, that none of it was really true. He needed one more hammer blow to kill this marriage.

"Everything Don has told you is true. I'm really leaving. I'm fed up with this whole thing. People are always coming up to my house to question me about my drinking and trying to project themselves into my life. This thing has been coming to a head for a long time and I'm damn glad it's over with."

Mr. Elliott became annoyed at Bill's brazenness. "Now let's all quiet down here a moment and see what there is to this. Who is this girl? Do we know her?"

Bill knew a cue line when it was thrown to him. This called for courtroom histrionics. "I refuse to answer that question on the ground that it is nobody's business but my own!"

"Well, Dad," Margot said, "if he doesn't want to answer I guess that's all right."

"Well, if he doesn't want to answer it is certainly not all right!"

And what's more, if he's going to leave he's going to do it after some arrangements have been made. We'll have legal papers drawn up and proper support provided for."

Bill turned a fifty-cent coin in his trousers pocket. It was all he had.

"Certainly there'll be separation money," he said. "I'll arrange these things. Go ahead and have your papers drawn up."

There was some fidgeting. Everyone knew there were many things to say but no one wanted to bring them to utterance. Mr. and Mrs. Elliott got their hats and coats. There was a definite letdown and a degree of sadness in the room.

"Good-by, dear. If you want anything, phone us." Then, softly: "So long, Bill."

"Bye-bye."

Margot left the room and went about her household duties. Bill sat there and wished that everything were arranged and done with so that he could leave. No amount of persuasion could have made him agree to start over again with Margot. This was his big chance to break the old tics and try new ones. He had dreaded this thing just as he once dreaded the possibility of Watson's firing him. But, once fired, he felt relieved and a little elated.

The next day Margot nervously asked him if he was sure about this new girl.

"Yes, yes," he said irritably. "Sorry. But that's the way I feel. I plan to leave in a couple of days."

There was a big powwow at the Elliott home. Mr. Elliott had some sort of temporary legal agreement before him at the dining-room table. The senior Wisters were there. So were Jack Geary and Elizabeth. And, of course, Margot and Bill. No lawyer. Everyone was nervously friendly. Mr. Elliott coughed and said:

"Are we to assume that you still feel the same way about this situation?"

Bill felt like yelling, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, dammit!" But instead he spoke softly: "I feel exactly the same way as I did the last time."

"Given it some thought?"

"Yes. I still feel the same way."

Margot stared hard at him. Her eyes were as close to defiance as it is possible for a naturally mild person's to be.

"Well, Dad," she said, "if that's the way he feels there is nothing we can do about it. He's old enough to know his own mind."

Mr. Elliott hadn't given up. It was obvious that he was going to patch this thing up or bust trying.

"Who is this woman, Bill? It won't be difficult to find out, you know."

"I'm not going to divulge her name. I can see no reason for involving her."

His mother and father sat in mute embarrassment, not saying anything and wishing they weren't there.

"All right," said Mr. Elliott. "I guess there's nothing we can do. If you'll just sign this temporary agreement we'll have the regular form drawn up later."

Bill examined the document. It said something about money. He jammed it into his pocket. He was again master of the scene.

"I'll read this carefully. If it meets with my approval I'll sign it."

He walked out and got his coat in the hall. Jack followed him.

"You were on the spot, Bill. But I sure admire the way you handled it and the way you protected the girl's name."

"Thanks," Bill said, and walked out.

He was twenty-eight. Margot was twenty-five. Billy was three. Charles was eleven months of age. He walked down the street and phoned Louise, told her that everything was all over and that he was leaving Margot in a few days.

When he made his final farewell there were tears in his eyes. He said good-by to the youngsters and clutched them to him fiercely. They didn't understand. Then he said good-by to Minnie, who was weeping too. She said the obvious.

"Now you must come and see the children, Mr. Wister."

Inside, he worried a little about the children. They were being victimized and he knew it. He left Billy laughing, grabbing the sides of the crib, sure that Daddy would be back again that eve-

ning. Charlie had a smiling trust in the strength of his arms. Bill sat hard on the lid of his emotions. In the hallway he kissed Margot on the cheek and there was no remembrance of the night they danced for the first time when he was Charlie Johnson's "friend from the West."

"I'll be in touch with you," he said huskily. "So long, dear."

Then Margot began to cry and in the cry was the wordless anguish of a girl who has tried awfully hard and has failed through no fault of her own. He knew that he had to leave immediately or he might not leave at all. She saw him move toward the door.

"Now take good care of yourself, dear," she moaned. "Remember the children are here. Come and see them."

That stung him.

"Of course I'll come and see them."

1930

THE STOCK MARKET collapsed shortly after his separation. Bill lost what little he had in it. He took a room with his mother and father, who had moved out to the St. Martin's section of Chestnut Hill. He had practically no money, so he sold the Stutz to a bootlegger for six hundred dollars and bought a secondhand Ford for a hundred and seventy-five. He visited the children on sober Sundays and saw Louise regularly.

There was a depression on and some men were thinking of selling apples on street corners to make a dollar. Bill got drunk and hocked his watch and his overcoat and sold his suits and old curios from around the house. He drew more blanks when drinking, and one night he wandered onto a Pullman at Lancaster and returned to consciousness in Trenton. On another night he drove drunkenly through West Philadelphia, desperate to get out and unable to find his way; he had a sweaty feeling that the police were going to pick him up at any moment.

Sometimes they did. He got to know the insides of several cells. The more he drank, the more he avoided the friends who might

stare at him. He sank to less frequented places, out-of-the-way spots, joints where drinks were cheaper, until he got to a Negro saloon on South Street. He liked this place. Gin was fifteen cents a slug and the customers had a hearty giggling respect for him. They didn't look down on him. And they liked him.

The walls were made of corrugated tin painted bathtub green. There was a right-angle bar and a chocolate-colored bartender who wore a dirty white coat and tight-fitting pants. He had a wispy mustache and everybody called him Sheik. He had the sinuously slow mannerisms of a cobra.

Bill came in one night half drunk. He drank the fire-bright gin until it numbed his lips. Then his head fell on the bar edge and he stared down drunkenly at the spit on the dirty tile floor. He heard music pounding somewhere. Timny piano music. He began to dream of his kids, his poor little kids with no daddy. He dreamed of Charlie Johnson and the good old times and the parties. He began to feel lonely and to wish that he had someone he could call "his." Someone who would stick by him come hell or high drinking. Someone who would never ask questions and who would always be attractive and helpful and considerate. Someone a man could place in a niche in his heart with reasonable assurance that she wouldn't fall out.

Vaguely he dreamed and vaguely he knew that two young Negroes were beside him. He growled that he was broke. They said that was all right. They lived near by and they had liquor and girls. They liked him. Thought he was a swell guy. Would he like to come to the party?

Then he knew that he was shuffling along a street, being held up under each armpit, his head down and rolling loosely with each step. He worried about getting arrested and what the family would say. He kept muttering things that started off as whispers and ended in incoherent shouts. His toes were pointed inward and he made no great effort to carry a portion of his own body.

The cool fresh darkness flooded in and he dreamed how nice it would be to marry a mulatto. He sat in the small front room of a small house in the colored section. There were four or five

beautiful mulattoes sitting around on the floor staring pure admiration at him. There were two or three Negro men sitting around but no one paid much attention to them. Bill was the center of attention. Then the scene shifted and he had married the prettiest of the mulattoes. She was the daughter of the most prominent Negro in all Philadelphia. He was allowed to drink all he liked and to do as he pleased. Bill was the most popular man in the colored section. Everyone loved him and looked up to him. He was the Great White Ever-Lovin' Father.

He came to on a couch. It was morning and his head was splitting down the middle and his tongue was too thick for his mouth and his throat was sandpapered. His hands trembled. His shoulders twitched. He heard sounds that weren't there and the slightest effort produced rasps from his throat.

He tried to sit up and look around. He was in a downstairs living room. He wasn't sure whether he had married a mulatto or not. Anyway, he was sure that those two fellows in the bar were real, and it was darned decent of them to put him to sleep on a couch. Darned decent. He thought: I'll call two of my new friends who love me. He tried to, but pain, not sound, came out.

He rubbed his hand on the front of the afghan which covered him. It felt stiff. He looked down. It was full of dry blood. Well, he thought, I suppose I fell. Darned nice of those fellows to take care of me like this. He looked behind the couch and saw a stairway leading upstairs. He summoned all his feeble strength.

"Hey, fellows!" It came out crackling dry.

He heard footsteps up there. Then he saw a stout, middle-aged colored woman. She took one look and wild horror came to her face.

"Oh, my God!" she screamed. "John! Oh, John!"

She ran back. Instinctively Bill turned toward the front door. He was down the front steps, running on fear, before he realized that he had no coat and only one shoe. Then he heard a boy's voice and turned. The boy was on the opposite sidewalk holding a brown wing-tip shoe. Bill ran back and got it.

"Where did you get this?"

The kid pointed to the alley next to the house Bill had just left. Bill slipped the shoe on without trying to tie the lace and ran until he saw a cab. He remembered that if you ask to be taken to a hospital the institution pays the fare.

In a few minutes he was on a table in the clinic and a colored nurse was wiping blood from his chin. A Negro doctor came into focus, threading a hooked needle. Bill begged for a drink. The doctor shook his head. Bill begged. No. No drink. Then he grabbed the sides of the table and felt cool perspiration bathe his forehead and the palms of his hands as the doctor put two stitches in his chin.

Charles Wister came down and drove his son home. Then Louise took over. There were no explanations. Bill undressed and took a shower. Now he thought he knew what had happened. His colored friends had wanted to roll him and they had taken him to an alley and slugged him hard—probably with knucks. They had taken his new watch, his driver's license, some personal papers, and his coat. They must have been trying to remove his shoes and had one off when something frightened them. Later Bill must have become half conscious and staggered up the porch of the house, wandered in, and fallen asleep on the couch.

1931

IT WAS SUMMER AGAIN and he took a small job selling space in a warehouse. When he worked he sent money to Margot for the children. When he didn't his mother sent it. Bill didn't like the warehouse. But he did like two men he met there. One was Joe Karns, a big, round, happy family man. The other was a tiny, bald man named Boris Konev.

Boris came to the warehouse to pick up equipment. He had a very nice business. When rows of houses were built in Philadelphia Boris sold the purchasers compact kitchen units which contained closets, a sink, drains, food storage space, and refrigerator, all in the most attractive colors.

Sometimes he sold fifty or a hundred units at a clip to housing

contractors. He was a busy little man and he had ideas for expanding. Bill liked him. So did Joe Karns. Bill asked Boris how much he'd take to admit two partners. Boris smiled and said he thought five thousand would cover it.

Karns was happy and saddened at the prospect. He thought the idea was the greatest potential money-maker in the world, but he didn't have twenty-five hundred dollars. He didn't have five hundred. So bighearted Bill told him not to worry, that he would get the five thousand and take Joe's note for his half.

Mrs. Wister always thought that if she helped her son once more it would be the making of him. And so, no matter how shallow the scheme, she was always half inclined to go along with it before she fully understood it. His father was always half against it before he heard it, and entirely against it after.

Bill's mother didn't have the five thousand dollars. So she borrowed it from Aunt Agnes. And Bill and Boris and Joe retained the law firm of Stillwell and Canterbury to produce the documents that would make them a corporation. It came up the Komfy Kompact Kitchenette Inc. They took offices at the end of a corridor in the Stephen Girard Building on Twelfth Street and hired an accountant and his wife to go over the books once a month.

The Komfy Kompact Kitchenette Inc. sat in executive session and voted William Wynne Wister president, Joseph Karns vice-president, and Boris Konev secretary-treasurer. Bill asked Boris how much he had been taking for himself each week and Boris said sometimes seventy-five, sometimes eighty-five, sometimes a hundred. Bill said how about each one taking seventy-five a week from the corporation and Boris and Joe thought that was fine.

Then Bill phoned the building manager and asked him to send up the man to put gilt-leaf letters on the office doors. They had a few more meetings but Bill always tried to close them as quickly as possible. He didn't want problems. He didn't care overly much about profits either. Sometimes he went out and tried to drum up business, but his satisfaction was in playing the successful businessman, the head of a Pennsylvania corporation. The day

his name was lettered in gold on the office door he made a special trip downtown to see it. He walked down the corridor and saw it obliquely and grinned and came up close and stared at it.

#### KOMFY KOMPACT KITCHENETTE INC.

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*William Wynne Wister*

PRES.

*Joseph P. Karns*

VICE-PRES.

*Boris Konev*

SEC.-TREAS.

He felt important. And it worked fine. For the next few weeks he worked hard to live up to the sign. Then the novelty wore off, and, as president, he felt exhausted and voted himself a vacation cruise to Nassau. He had a good time and enjoyed every unconscious moment of it.

When Bill came to in New York, he phoned the medical director of the Germantown Hospital and said: "This is Bill Wister. Get yourself set for the sickest goddamned guy in the world. I want a suite of rooms."

When he came out he discovered that Komfy had sprung a leak. Joe Karns had already quit because, he said, the business was too small to split three ways. Boris had taken some money coming to him and walked out. When Bill walked in, taking care to admire the gold leaf on the door, he found nine dollars and fifty-seven cents in the petty-cash box. He took it and went out and bought himself a drink.

1931

THERE COMES A TIME in an alcoholic's life when he can trust no one. He wants friends. He needs them. He is in constant need of nursing and forgiveness and silence about his sins. And each time he bumps his head on a bender he becomes less trustful

and, conversely, as he slips and slides, the need for a friend grows greater. By friend he does not mean a give-and-take relationship. He means take.

Bill now began to take the back streets going home to Chestnut Hill. He didn't want to see anyone he knew and he skulked along, watching each approaching person carefully. When he saw someone he knew he lowered his hatbrim.

One day he met Jim Haggard. Jim had been Bill's nurse on one of his sanitarium siestas. Jim had been a very easy guy to reason with, and Bill vaguely remembered that Jim lived with a single sister. He gave Jim a large hello.

Bill went to Jim's house. Then he took his car up there and parked it at the curb outside, on Chestnut near Fifty-second. And Bill took his quart in, made himself very much at home, met Jim's sister, and was very jolly. When he awakened in the morning he was in a twin bed. Jim was in the other. And Bill no longer felt jolly.

"Will you walk down with me and get a pint? I'm dying, Jim."

Jim tried to talk him out of it. Jim's sister got out of bed in the next room and made coffee, but Bill wouldn't drink it. Jim pulled his trousers on.

"Don't you think you ought to cut it out today?"

"No. I'll only get one quart."

They walked down four blocks to the speakeasy and came back with a quart. And when that was gone Bill needed company to walk for another. And this went on day after day.

Once, when both Jim and his sister had to leave, Bill was in a sweaty terror. He was afraid someone would come to the front door. He was afraid that the phone might ring. What would he do then? Answer it? No. Couldn't answer anything. He worried and fretted and jumped at any sound and when the fresh September winds rattled the windows he cursed bitterly and stood tensely, afraid to sit down.

He looked out the front window for Jim and his sister. They

weren't there. Neither was his Ford coupé. He looked at the spot where it had been parked and walked away from the window and went back and looked again. It really wasn't there. He went back upstairs to his room and took a few long pulls from the bottle. He went back downstairs and phoned the director of public safety. He told the director that his car was missing, giving his name and license number and other pertinent data. Then he hung up and wondered who had stolen it and where it was.

Two hours later the director of public safety phoned back.

"Your car has been located in a public garage in Chestnut Hill."

That sounded ridiculous. Bill knew only one—the Park-Hill—where his father kept his Packard. And what would the Ford be doing there and who could have taken it there? And why?

"What's the name of the garage, Commissioner?"

"Park-Hill."

"Now how did it get there?"

"We don't know. All we know is that's where it is."

"Oh. Well, thanks. Thanks a lot."

The only people who could have taken his car were his parents. And if they had removed it from in front of Jim's house, then they knew. And if they knew and didn't do anything about it, then he was safe and could continue drinking for a while.

The days became lightning-short and the nights interminable. Jim sat and talked of alcoholics whom he had taken care of, all of them worse than Bill. Jim's sister tried to get him to eat something—anything at all. She tried coaxing and pleading and reprobining. Sometimes he said: "Okay. As soon as it cools." Then whatever it was would get cold and congealed and Jim's sister would reheat it and Bill would go through it again.

He refused to go to bed unless there was a pint of rye under his pillow. He'd take two giant slugs and then sleep on his stomach with one hand under the pillow around the neck of the bottle. He was in constant terror of being arrested, and he was afraid of fear dreams in which he was always caught in a burn-

ing building or a flaming plane. Sometimes he awakened screaming that the house was on fire and Jim would sleepily prop himself on an elbow, light the light, and murmur:

"Everything is all right, Bill. Light a cigarette. You'll be all right."

It took Bill fifteen minutes sitting in bed to determine that the building wasn't really burning and that he had been dreaming again. In the morning he'd take the last slug from the bottle and get out of bed to go down four blocks for another. By now he no longer tied his shoelaces, his hat was out of shape, his eyes were dark slits, his shirt was filthy, his suit badly in need of pressing, his fly open, and his hair uncombed.

At ten one morning he had placed a half-empty quart on the top shelf of the closet in Jim's room and was sitting downstairs in the dining room in bathrobe and slippers, telling Jim how he and his sister would be paid for all they had done for him. A steaming cup of coffee sat before him. He got up and phoned a bootlegger to send two quarts as quickly as possible.

He was still on the phone when he heard the front bell ring. Jim answered it. Over the voice of the bootlegger he heard gruff talking and the word "Wister." Then, alerted, he heard Jim say: "Who? Wister? Oh yes. He's here. Won't you come in, please?" Bill turned to see two men walk into the room. They wore blue serge suits and had big feet. "Make it fast. Get it up here in a hurry," Bill said, and hung up.

Bill was sure they were detectives and were going to question him about the car. One was silent and suspicious. The other had a vague trace of a smile. "Are you W. W. Wister?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"Judge Wabash wants to see you."

"Who?"

"Judge Wabash."

"Never heard of him. What's he want to see me about?"

"We don't know, Mack. All we know is he wants to see you in his chambers."

"Where's that?"

"City Hall."

"That's strange. A judge wants to see me in his chambers and I don't know him and I don't know his chambers and I can't understand why or when."

"When is two-thirty?"

"All right then. You tell Judge Wabash that I will see him in his chambers at two-thirty promptly."

Both detectives sat down. Bill wasn't frightened. He smiled helplessly.

"Well, here we are," he said. "I presume you men have a warrant for my arrest?"

One held up a piece of paper.

"Now look!" Bill exploded. "What the hell is this all about? You fellows walk in and tell me that some judge wants to see me at two-thirty. What are the charges?"

The detectives looked at each other.

"Look. We don't know. All we know is we have this bench warrant for your arrest."

Bill began to think longingly of the bottle up on the closet shelf.

"Well then, I guess I'll go upstairs and get dressed. You guys want to come along?"

"Yop."

"Okay. Come ahead."

They went upstairs and Bill tried to figure it out. Then he concentrated on the bottle, taking it down from the shelf and twisting the cork out.

"Drink?"

"No, thanks."

Bill poured a half water glass of whisky. Then he downed it, held the glass in his hand a moment, and set it back on the chest of drawers. He took no chaser. He went into the bathroom and drew a warm bath and tried to scrape a week's whiskers off his face. As he sat in the tub he looked longingly at the little opaque window overhead and knew that the cops were watching every move. In his room he dressed and finished the bottle. He worked

slowly, knowing that the bootlegger was coming with two quarts. Two desperately needed quarts.

He stalled for time in every way he could. He forgot to brush his shoes and then remembered that he didn't like the tie he had on and then he felt sure that his underwear was on inside out and all these things took a lot of ticks on the old grandfather's clock with the silver face.

He began to suspect that the bootlegger was one of those stupid delayed-action artists who was probably out in Tioga right now delivering a pint to people who wouldn't need it until Aunt Mamie's birthday three weeks hence. He stalled until after one. He needed a drink very badly but he said, "Let's go," and they took him out and he said good-by to Jim. Jim's sister had gone out, obviously because she couldn't stand the scene.

The cops had a two-door sedan and ordered Bill to sit in back. At City Hall they rode up in an elevator, took him under the arms, and pushed him inside a door. One look was enough. There sat a young judge with pince-nez and robes. And before him sat Bill's mother and father, his sister Elizabeth and her husband, and the family lawyer and, last of all, the very doctor who had sent him West. In a corner were Bill's two valises, bulging. His reaction was fury.

"Just have a seat there, Mr. Wister," the judge said, pointing.

His mother said, "Hello, Bill," and tried to smile reassuringly. No one else said anything. He looked from face to face but they were all watching the judge.

"I've been going over a record of your drinking background," Judge Wabash said. "We've come to the conclusion that you should go away to a hospital for a while."

"Now wait a minute," Bill said shrilly. "I've been pulled in here on a blind and I have nobody representing *me*. And if I'm not mistaken I think I have the right to have counsel."

"Granted," the judge said. "I'll give you fifteen minutes to get your attorney here."

Bill hurried to a phone booth down the hall, the detectives at

his side. He phoned Stillwell and Canterbury and asked for Bill Stillwell.

"I'm in a hell of a jam over here in City Hall, Bill. I've got to produce counsel in Judge Wabash's chambers in fifteen minutes. Think you can make it?"

"I'll be right over."

Bill paced up and down the corridor while the detectives stood and watched. Stillwell came off the elevator panting.

"What's the matter, Bill?"

"I don't know."

They went into Judge Wabash's chambers. Stillwell started to say something and then subsided like a run-down victrola record. He melted down so fast that even Bill knew that the judge had given him some sort of high sign.

"I've already taken this matter up in court, Mr. Stillwell, and I'm well acquainted with the case. As far as I'm concerned, for the boy's own good, for the good of everyone concerned, I'm sentencing him to a period of not less than one year at Norristown State Hospital, he to be released at the discretion of the doctor in charge. Of course, if he recovers before that, he will not have to serve the full time." He turned to Bill. "That is my verdict. It is one year at the Norristown State Hospital."

Stillwell said nothing. No one moved. Jack Geary came over to Bill and said he'd be glad to drive him out in his new car. He put an arm on Bill's shoulder and it was flung off. Then Bill began to sob. The family didn't turn to look at him. The judge must have made a sermon to steel Mrs. Wister to this trial. At last he turned to go outside and his mother said: "I wouldn't mind it, Bill. It's probably a very nice place and I'll be up to see you soon." Bill walked outside, still crying. She had said the same thing when she left him at Hill School.

He got control of himself. He didn't know that he was going to an insane asylum; he thought that Norristown was a medical hospital. He told the cops he was ready, made no farewells, and got into the elevator. Downstairs he hired a cab and the detectives placed him on the seat between them. Bill looked out.

It was a misty, foggy day. Reaction began to set in. His hands shook. His brain pounded. His eyeballs ached. He felt that his heart would stop at any moment.

"Listen," he said, "do you think we could stop for just a moment at my bootlegger's? Listen, fellows. My nerves are shot. I mean badly shot. I need a drink. It's just a little act of mercy. The place is right up here on our way to Norristown and it will only take one minute. I'll just take a couple out of the bottle and you fellows can have the rest."

The one who almost never talked spoke.

"No, Johnny. It ain't far and it's getting late. We'll just keep rolling along and we know all the doctors up there. When we arrive you just leave it to us. We'll see that you get a nice drink the minute you get in."

Bill sagged. It was no use. He could hardly wait until they got to the hospital. He just had to have that drink. It was no longer a question of being able to do without it. It now ranked equal with breathing. He visualized what four fingers of rye could do for him. On the way the cops talked about what a nice place it was and of the many cases they had taken up, but he hardly heard them, wondering what kind of liquor they'd give him and how much.

The cab braked before a big gate. Beyond the gate the buildings were sheeted with fog. A gatekeeper came out, squinting at the cab, and swung one gate open. The cab purred in onto a gravel drive and then straight up until they came to a stop in front of a small red brick building. One of the detectives got out and came back with a paper in his hand. The cab swung left and went over to number 6 building. Bill saw an ancient grilled iron stoop and an old red brick wall. He walked into a musty hallway and into a small office.

There was a small doctor in white duck. He had an eyelid tic. He took the paper from the detective and asked Bill his name, his age, where he was born, where he lived, his mother's name, his father's name, and some other questions. When he finished a detective spoke.

"Listen, Doc. This guy's a friend of ours. He's a nice guy and he wanted to stop on the way up and have a little drink. We told him we'd fix it up with you—that you fellows are a nice friendly bunch. He's pretty well shot, Doc."

The doctor squinted at Bill, who smiled bravely.

"Why sure," he said. "What would you like, mister? Dry martini? What do you generally drink, scotch and soda?"

"I'll take four fingers of anything you've got, Doctor," Bill said humbly. "No soda."

"All right now, Mr. Wister," the doctor said with exaggerated politeness. He pushed a button on the wall. "The thing for you to do is just go upstairs and get yourself undressed and get into bed and I'll see that you get your drink."

"Thanks very, very much, Doctor. That's swell of you."

A giant, as fat as he was tall, walked in.

"John," the doctor said, "this is Mr. Wister. Will you take him upstairs and see that he's made comfortable? You go on up with John and I'll be around to see you later."

"You're not going to forget that drink, are you, Doc?"

"Absolutely not."

Bill left with the giant and was led up a long flight of creaky stairs with black rubber mats on each step. They came to a big door. Bill couldn't understand why it had no knob. John swung a big ring of long brass keys from a keeper on his belt and unlocked the door. When they got inside he relocked it. They were in a large alcove with three big bay windows in front. Eight men in bathrobes sat around forlornly on deck chairs. Two were talking to themselves. At that point Bill began to suspect.

He looked at John and John took him by the arm and led him down a long corridor. Bill shied away from patients coming the other way. The men all wore gray bathrobes and all had crew haircuts. He was taken into a hydrotherapy room and given a bath. John said nothing. When Bill had dried himself and been weighed John said: "Put this on," and rolled up a nightgown and threw it hard at Bill's head. Next came a bathrobe. Then John tossed a pair of cloth slippers at his feet. He

threw Bill's clothes in a heap against the wall and led him back down the long corridor to a room on the right that faced a back courtyard.

The door had no knob. It was unlocked and Bill was led inside. It was about eight by eleven in size. There was a bed against a wall, a bare floor, no furniture, no pictures, no light. In the back Bill could see dusk sharp against the silhouetted bars in the only window. John reached into Bill's bathrobe pocket and took his remaining cigarettes.

"The doctor will be in to see you later."

"How about that drink?"

"The doctor will take care of that."

John left and locked the door. Bill braced himself against hysterics. He thought of Louise and wondered if she knew about this and how he could get in touch with her. He thought of the fun they had had and the beautiful Stutz and the wrestling matches and the laughter and all those things alien to this room. There was no chair and he tired of standing, so he lay down on the bed. His skin began to burn. He figured it might be some chemical they used to clean the sheets or the nightgown. He got up.

He paced. He looked out the window but it was night, wet and misty. He sat down on the bed and wiped the palms of his hands on his bathrobe. Kaleidoscopic thoughts zipped through his head, gone before he was conscious of them. He heard a lot of noise in the hall, yelling and cursing and an authoritative voice roaring: "Shut up! Be quiet!"

There he heard footsteps approaching and he counted them until they were outside the door. Ah, the doctor! But the steps went past and faded in the bedlam. Then he heard more steps coming. This was his drink! But it wasn't. He went back to bed, turned his face to the wall, hunched his body up, and hoped they understood what this agony was like. If they understood they'd bring the drink. He began to doze but he was afraid he'd be asleep when the doctor arrived with the drink and that the

doctor would leave without giving it to him. So he sat up and waited.

He didn't know what time it was. He dozed sitting up. He dreamed that long lines of people were coming up to his room, all bearing big drinks, and he dreamed that he was back in the bootlegger's lavatory knocking off a pint. He could taste it going down and he sat there swallowing and then it built up and built up and he knew that they were not going to bring him a drink and that they had been laughing at him all the time because they would never have the heart to bring a dying man a drink, so he stood and tapped lightly on the door.

"Oh, Nurse," he said softly. "Nurse. Oh, Nurse."

No answer. Everybody in the whole cockeyed world was lying to him all the time, deceiving him.

"Oh, Turnkey!" he yelled. "Hey, Turnkey! Hey, Turnkey! Answer! Turnkey!"

He listened. It was quiet outside. That meant it must be at least eleven and everyone was in bed. He yelled again. No answer. He yelled and pounded on the door and yelled louder until his voice cracked into a shrill scream and he punched and pounded and howled and frothed. Then he got quiet and half murmured to the door: "Okay. I'll settle for a glass of water. That all right?"

But there was no answer to that. His throat was parched and he begged for water, shouting the one word, bellowing and pleading until his voice cracked. He wanted to give up. He was exhausted and the nerves of his body yanked him taut in spasms. He heard a key in the door. Quickly he sat on the bed. A big bug light flashed on in his face. Behind it was a sawed-off broom handle in a fist. It was the night man. He didn't know what kind of a case this was.

"What the hell you trying to do?" he growled. "Start something?"

"Can't someone please for God's sweet sake bring me a glass of water?"

The bug light and broom handle disappeared. The door closed. The key turned.

"Listen!" Bill tried to yell. "I'm not crazy. I just want a drink of water!"

The man came back in a minute with a big tin cup slopping over with water. "Why the hell didn't you say so?" he said.

"That's what I've been yelling for an hour."

"You want more service than a guy in the Ritz."

"All I want is a drink of water."

Bill gulped it. The cup was big and the water ran down the sides of his jaw line and onto his neck and down the front of his nightshirt.

"May I have a little more, please?"

The night man growled and went out and locked the door and came back and unlocked it and handed him a cupful. Bill drank it all.

"Would it be possible to have a cigarette, please?"

"Ain't no smokin' in here."

"Can't I have just one puff?"

"Nothin' doin'."

"The doctor said he was going to come up here with a drink."

"I don't see no sedation on no sheet of yours."

"I thought he was going to bring me a drink of liquor. That's what he said. I hope to God I'm not going to be here all night without something."

"I'll call the doctor up."

The night man came back five minutes later with two capsules. Bill swallowed them. The night man locked the door and left. Bill got into bed and faced the wall and knew that the only way to block his misery was to go to sleep thinking about a drink and about Louise. He dozed and remembered that it was September 1931 and that little Billy must have just started kindergarten. Charlie would be three next month.

He awakened violently. A siren was screaming somewhere near. He heard four or five blasts, jumped out of bed and opened the window. Grabbing the bars, he shook them with

all his strength and croaked: "My God, a fire! Of all the places I could have died, I have to fry in a place like this!" He shook the bars for five minutes. Then he saw lights going on in other buildings and knew it was a wake-up siren. He went back to sleep shaking. Soon a man in a turtle-neck sweater came in, shouting: "Okay, Jack. Throw on your bathrobe and slippers and come down the hall for the showers." In the hall he saw men waiting in bathrobes.

They marched down in silent file to the shower room. Five stood nude in one large shower stall. Bill shivered. He looked at the other men. They stood quietly. When the water came it was lukewarm. The men didn't move. They didn't jump about and slap their skins or sing or howl. They just blinked. Bill stood it for a moment. Then he stepped out of the shower, rubbed himself down, and put on his slippers and bathrobe.

He looked at the others and thought of draft horses in rain. The man in the turtle-neck sweater yelled: "Come on there, you! Wanna get drownded?" He had to yank two out. They marched back and Bill went to bed. It was raining outside and he faced the wall. After a while he felt that someone was in the room and turned slowly to see a patient standing by his bed with a tray.

"What the hell do you want?"

"Breakfast."

"Put the goddam thing down."

Bill turned to the wall. He was trying to conjure Louise, but he felt that the patient was still there. He popped up in bed.

"Now what?" The man stood silent. On the tray were two pieces of bread, a soupy cereal in a bowl, and a glass of milk. "Put it down, I said. Put it down and get the hell out of this room before I throw you out!" He was afraid of the man. The patient placed the tray at the foot of the bed.

The hall was a bedlam of yelling, and patients shuffling up and down in their slippers stood in the doorway and stared. Bill turned to the wall again. He was sick and weak and sweaty. He noticed that the mental cases stared without embarrassment.

At ten Dr. Bean came in. Bean was a moonface with fuzz on top. He brought a chair in with him.

"How you feeling?"

"Okay."

"You're a drinker, eh?"

Bill wanted to turn back to the wall. "Maybe so," he said. "How about getting up out of this bed? I want a smoke."

"You've got no clothes."

"I had clothes when I came in here."

"They're over at fumigation. You'll get them back in three days. Then you can smoke on the grounds."

The doctor asked a few more questions, then he got up and left. Bill turned his face to the wall and shook. At eleven-thirty a distinguished man with gray hair came in, walked across the room, and looked out the window. The man talked softly of the buildings and their various purposes and how long ago they were built. Bill turned from the wall. The man sounded regular.

"Over on the right there is the power plant. You'll see it when you get up. When you're allowed outside I'll take you over and show you the steam generator. It's a great piece of work."

"Thanks. But you'll have to excuse me. I feel lousy."

"Ever hear of the Benson generator?"

"No."

"I own all the patents on them."

"That so?"

"Yes sir. They can't put a generator in a power plant anywhere without first getting my okay on the royalties."

Bill murmured: "Oh, Jesus, no! He was my last hope! Oh, God!" He lay down and turned his face to the wall and said: "Okay. You run along now and we'll discuss these things some other time."

He heard the man leave. Bill wanted to write a note to Louise. He learned that his room was to remain unlocked as long as he behaved and he learned that certain ambulatory patients had menial jobs and some importance. One of these got him pen, paper, and ink. He wrote a terse note explaining that he

had been arrested and committed and telling where he was but not how miserable he was because he was afraid that the hospital might not mail the letter.

Lunch was vienna roast, gravy, carrots, warm milk, and gelatin. Someone told him that patients were fed on a budget of eight cents a day. Bill didn't believe it. The sheriff came in. He wore a Boy Scout hat and carried yellowed newspapers under his clawlike arm. He handed Bill a folded piece of paper. On it was written in pencil:

DEAR BILL:

*Hurry up and get out of that violent ward and come on downstairs. It's not so bad down here. You might even enjoy it.*

JACK BROMLEY

Bill chuckled. He felt cheered to think that his old friend of the Jersey coast and the Van Ness Act was in the building somewhere. He felt energetic enough to try to find out what he could do to get off the second floor. He stayed in bed all afternoon. Then supper came: a square of cheese, syrup and bread, coffee, and gelatin. After supper he found that it was still raining.

That evening he met Lonnie Bacon, a thin, soft-voiced man, boss of all the orderlies in the place. Everyone called him "Cap." He had the attitude of a man who seemed to feel that all of these people were sick and that he was going to do his gentle best to help.

"Cap, what's the routine here? What are the chances for me getting downstairs?"

"Mr. Wister, there is a regular routine. I know you'd be much more comfortable downstairs. This is a terribly noisy place. Besides, you get a few more privileges downstairs. Tell you what. I'll see tomorrow if I can hustle up your clothes. Meanwhile you can talk to the doctor and I'm sure they'll let you go downstairs as soon as they're sure you're equal to it."

"Thanks."

"I'll see what I can do."

"Thanks a lot. Is there any chance of me getting a puff on a cigarette?"

Cap looked around and smiled, then he took Bill by the arm.

"Come on down to my room. Maybe I can show you a few interesting books."

When they got inside the room Cap closed the door, leaned against it, and took out a pack of cigarettes.

"Help yourself."

Bill reached, lit one, and puffed. His face was smothered in smiles as he exhaled slowly, almost orgiastically, and studied the burning cigarette.

"This isn't routine with me, Mr. Wister, but I know how it feels when you need a smoke badly. I'm always glad to help a fellow out."

Bill puffed a little more and then put the cigarette out. He walked out with Cap and went to his room.

"Thanks," he said. "Thank you, Cap."

He went to bed and slept.

In the morning Dr. Bean ordered him to the laboratory, a white-walled room with glass cases filled with shiny instruments. The nurse had dyed hair and dead features. She kept a chart as the doctor talked. He explained nothing to Bill. He examined his throat, ears, and eyes. Then he tried to take a specimen for a Wassermann test. He stuck the needle in Bill's arm five times without hitting the vein. Bill began to breathe hard. The doctor dropped the glass syringe on a sterile cloth and pushed Bill's face away violently.

"Turn your goddam stinking breath the other way, will you?"

Bill averted his face.

That evening another doctor came into the room with Cap. The doctor seemed bored and he sat in the darkened room, vaguely looking at Bill by the light of the bulb in the hall. Cap coughed.

"I think it would be a good idea, Doctor, if you sent Mr. Wister downstairs. His clothes have come back."

"Okay, okay," the doctor said, irritated. "Whatever you say. Make him put on his clothes and send him down."

The doctor left. Bill looked at Cap and felt a gratitude that came out in half sentences and unshed tears. He jumped into his clothes and grasped Cap's hand and then grasped it again. As he went down the squeaky stairs he wondered if he had remembered to say thank you to Cap. When he got to the bottom he saw Jack Bromley in street clothes playing two-handed stud. He was sitting in a clean, quiet convalescent ward. There were about ten beds against the walls.

Jack jumped up when he saw Bill.

"Well, well, well! Welcome to the Lounge Club!"

There was laughter and simultaneous babbling and a lot of ground to cover and an introduction to the other half of the stud game, a fellow named Jim Bartlett.

"How did you like it up there, Wis?" Jack asked. "Isn't that the damnedest place in the whole world?"

Jim told Bill that this ward was called Lower 6. Jack said: "I figured you'd be up here, Wis. About ten days ago I saw your mother and your sister walking around the grounds outside with the superintendent."

"Why the hell didn't you tip me off?"

"Listen. I was in no position to tip anybody off about anything. At that time I was upstairs myself."

"How did they get you in here?"

Jack shook his head slowly. "That's a very bad deal, Wis. I was sitting home reading the *Evening Bulletin*. Minding my own business. I hadn't had a drop in two days. Suddenly two of the biggest, toughest flatfeet I ever saw in my life busted in and yanked me out from behind the paper and took me down to City Hall and put me through a whole lot of crap and the next thing I knew I was sitting upstairs in a bird cage."

Bill and Jack and Jim began to talk and laugh. Before they realized it they were laughing more than talking and then they laughed harder and harder and soon they were doubled over

and tears were coming from their eyes and they were clutching their sides and nobody dared say a word because, no matter what it was, it would sound more excruciatingly funny than what had made them laugh originally.

After a while they stopped and wiped their eyes and Jack saw a mentally deficient case staring at them with his mouth open.

"Hey, Commodore," he said, "what do you say we go over the wall tonight? You don't like it here, do you?"

The man walked away, staring dully at Jack. Bill shook his head.

"This is a bad place to talk like that," he said. "Suppose somebody heard you? I don't think it's good business to act nuts in a joint like this."

They went to bed. In the morning they had breakfast and then an official came in and called out Bill's name and Jim's name and several other names and told them to go to the tunnel below and wait. Jack was taken to another building and locked in a ward. Bill didn't see him again.

Bill's group was taken to Lower 5. It was known as a quiet floor and it was clean. There was a manic depressive who was an interesting conversationalist until the cycle overcame him. Then he was bad and had to be taken away. In the upper end of the ward were four young homosexuals who prettied their beds and had cut flowers in vases and a talent for not annoying the other patients. There was a fat old man with white hair who had been a concert musician at one time. He was more effeminate than the young fellows and he was unashamed to take advantage of sick young men in the lavatory. He had been committed for that.

On Sunday morning the first inspection came. The patients lined up in a long row in the main hall. The superintendent came along with an assistant and listened to complaints and requests. He was kindly.

"Doc," one man blurted, "I wrote my sister to send out some new shirts. She ain't sent 'em."

"Now, Tim, you know your sister is very fond of you. You'll hear from her soon. She'll bring the shirts out—you bet."

He inched down the line, stopping to talk to each man by name and stopping to listen.

"Hello, Joe. How are you? Good. By the way, your mother wrote to me. Yes. She's coming up next week and she's going to bring your uncle Tom with her."

The patient straightened up and beamed.

"Thank you. Thank you very much, sir."

Bill said: "Doctor, I'd like to get permission for ground parole."

"Yes, yes. I know you would. A little early yet. I'm responsible for you, you know. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get in touch with your family. I'd like to think this over first."

Bill found out later that the superintendent wrote to his mother. And Mrs. Wister wrote back: "Why, yes. Give him ground parole. He won't run away."

It was a nice day and he went out and felt the sponge of lawn under his feet and saw the unbearable brightness of a September sky. There were birds winging carelessly to branches, great trees and hills beyond the walls, and fat clouds loafing and a neurotic squirrel who trusted no one and nurses who looked womanly under the starched whites and cars rolling without restraint across the fat lands of eastern Pennsylvania. Bill was permitted outside from after breakfast until after supper.

He noticed for the first time that all the buildings were connected by tunnels and that you could hear the herds, from outside, shuffling through from one ward to another. For a while he watched the patients on the lawn. One man walked up and down four paces each way, plucking rapidly at his teeth. Two men put their caps upside down on the grass and tried to dive into them. Old man Bostwick, who had a white goatee and had been an inmate for thirty-five years, saw Bill watching. He walked close.

"It wasn't always like this," he said angrily. "When I came up they had only two buildings. My family owned all this prop-

erty." His arms swept the horizons. "The day I arrived I came up on the Reading and they had a brass band and streamers and banners at the station and they welcomed me by marching me up here. Now you see what you've got—scum! This is riff-raff. The whole atmosphere of this place has changed." He snorted. "Dis-gus-ting!" And spat. The only truthful statement anyone ever heard Bostwick make was that he had been in Norristown for thirty-five years.

Bill attained the semiofficial status of an ambulatory patient. He helped with the soiled cases. These men are kept nude and locked in a room. They tear clothes from their bodies. They aren't lewd. They're psychotic and their little worlds haven't room for clothes or co-operation. A little man who spent his years in abject silence arose one night and pulled the half-filled chamber pot from under his bed. Quietly he stirred. When the substance was thick enough he took it to a wall and began to make swift motions with his hand. Then he went to bed. In the morning the attendant came in and saw the dried, claylike head of an Indian chief on the wall.

Officials of Norristown came from other buildings to see it. No one knew what had impelled the little man to do it. And no one could understand how he could draw such a tremendous thing with such a disgusting substance. And further, no one understood from what abysmal depths this artistic talent had risen, because everyone agreed that the Indian was a masterpiece of light and shadow. During the discourse, the little man sat on the side of his bed with his chin on his chest, shyly peeping up at them and grinning and smacking his thighs together with embarrassment.

There was no therapy for Bill. The nearest thing to treatment came a month after admission when he was summoned to "staff" at 3 P.M. All patients, sooner or later, go to "staff." You sit on a backless enamel stool and answer questions propounded by ten doctors. The old-timers said: "Be careful when you go up there, kid. They'll ask you how you like the place. Say fine. How do you like the eats? Fine. Just fine. Anybody been mean

to you since you got here? Nope. Everybody's dandy. They try to get you mad. Don't get mad. If they get you mad you're good for a year. If you complain you got delusions of persecution."

Bill was nervous going to "staff." He was at a disadvantage. He walked into a large room with white walls and saw a group of white-coated doctors and two women doctors sitting in a semi-circle. They motioned him to go over near the window and sit down on a stool. He felt uncomfortable. He saw the squinting doctor who had promised him a drink. It made him angry. The head doctor studied a chart and said: "This is an alcoholic case." He turned to Bill.

"How do you get started on these debauches?"

Some of the interns began to take notes.

"I really don't know. I start off to drink like anyone else. I have a few drinks and I control it for a while and then I start morning drinking when I'm nervous and apprehensive and I just go on. I don't plan to get drunk when I start."

"Uh-huh. You've been doing this a long time?"

"Since I was sixteen. I haven't had much control in the last ten years."

"How old are you now?"

"Thirty."

"Have you ever tried not drinking?"

"That's all right for a while. But sooner or later I get started again."

"How much liquor would you say you drink on one of these episodes?"

"I don't know."

"A quart? Two quarts? A gallon or what?"

"I don't know. I take one or two drinks, maybe three, then I don't keep track."

"Well, make a guess. Say a quart?"

"No. Maybe more than that. Maybe three or four quarts."

"Three or four *quarts!*"

"I suppose so. I don't know. I don't suppose anyone knows."

A young woman intern stopped scribbling and looked at the doctor.

"I'd be particularly interested to know whether this patient drinks whisky or gin."

"I drink anything with alcohol in it. When I can't get liquor I've had lemon extract and vanilla and witch hazel."

The woman smiled and turned to her notes. Bill didn't like her. He didn't like "staff." He felt like an experimental guinea pig and he resented the childish questions. They proved nothing which wasn't already known, and they did nothing to help him to understand his drinking.

"How do you like it up here?" the head doctor asked. That brought a smile from Bill. It made him think of the be-careful advice.

"Very nice place. Beautiful grounds."

"What are you grinning at?"

"I'm reminded of something."

"What are you reminded of?"

"Nothing that would interest you. It's something that amused me."

"How long do you think you should stay up here?"

"I don't know."

"Do you intend to drink when you get out of here?"

"I hope not. It's not a happy life."

"Then why do you do it?"

"I don't know."

The doctor turned to his confreres. "Any more questions?" They shook their heads. He turned to Bill.

"You can go."

He got up and left without thanking them, feeling that they had placed him on exhibition without understanding what they were doing or why they were doing it.

He walked out on the lawn, went over near Building 6, and stood looking at the circle. It was a collection of park benches facing inward to form a crude ring. On the benches sat guards. Inside the ring the hopelessly insane exercised. Bill asked about them. Some were potentially dangerous. Most of them didn't want to exercise. One man was a paretic who hadn't spoken for

eight years. The majority were schizophrenics who were locked up in tiny worlds of their own. Some prayed. Some mumbled. They were assorted live bodies stumbling and bumping into each other and staring blankly ahead.

Bill knew one of them. He had been on parties in Philadelphia with the man many times. He had been gay and a good teller of stories. Now he was a hider. He hid in corners or under the bed for hours. Bill spoke to him as he walked in the circle. The man stared. He had no remembrance. Another man wept unceasingly. Bill learned that no one had been to see him in ten years. Bill stared and was stirred. He felt saddened to think that psychiatry could do so little for these men.

He stayed three and a half months. Louise drove up as often as possible in his Ford. Mrs. Wister came up about twice a month. He didn't like visitors. It made him feel bad. He convinced his mother that Norristown could do nothing more for him and he asked her to see the superintendent about getting him home. He said he wanted to get back into the world of business. He wanted to get away from Philadelphia and go to the coast.

The superintendent was matter-of-fact. "I've talked to your mother and we agree that you have co-operated here and you've spent enough time and there's nothing more to be gained. Now you must remember that you have a court order hanging over your head and you're going out on parole. You must go directly from here to see Judge Wabash. I want you to be there at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning."

He handed Bill a paper.

"Thank you for everything you've done," Bill said. "I know you tried to help."

"You're an intelligent young man. Now get out and make a name for yourself. You can do it."

Bill left. It was a cold January morning. His father drove up through the gates and met him.

"Well," he grunted, "I'm glad this thing is over. You look fine. Uh—I hope you're going to take good care of yourself."

They drove to City Hall, Philadelphia. Judge Wabash squared himself.

"It was a very difficult thing for me to do, Wister. I am a good friend of your mother and father and it was something that had to be done. The best of luck to you."

"Just a moment. I'm not insane but I've been in a mental institution. What will this mean to me in the future?"

"You haven't a worry in the world. The record will be impounded. Forget it. Start off on the right foot and make up your mind that all this is behind you."

Bill left and met Louise. Then he went to see Margot and the children. He was delighted to see that the boys had grown and that Charlie seemed to remember him. He took them out for a ride and picked up Louise. Bill couldn't understand why Billy seemed so antagonistic toward the lady.

Three weeks later Bill Wister was in Cody, Wyoming, drunk.

## 1932

THIS WAS the black year. It was the year of cruelly clear skies over industrial towns. It was the spring of Hoovervilles and homeless families and the soft hopeless shuffle of eleven million pairs of feet looking for work. It was the April when shivering children waited in front of bakeries to buy day-old bread. It was the day of salary cuts and bank failures. It was April, a month after the Lindbergh baby had been kidnaped, and a month before the body was found in the woods.

Bill had come back from the West. He was cradled in the arms of Louise and for a time he was content. But soon the old uneasiness was upon him and he hurried to New York and took a room in a cheap hotel. He applied for a job with a laundry-dryer manufacturer who sold to apartment houses. The man wanted to know what experience Mr. Wister had. Bill didn't dare relate his true experience because a check-back might show him up as a drinker.

He began to drink in speakeasies. The routine was familiar.

He became drunker and drunker and then one day the chamber-maid reported that the bed sheets had been burned and the hotel manager inspected the room and phoned the Wisters in Philadelphia. Bill was taken out in an ambulance, semiconscious. The ambulance whirled him out on Long Island to a place called Queen's Retreat.

His eyes opened at four o'clock the following afternoon. He was trying to swallow and his mouth was cotton-dry. Studying the strange room, he saw a fake mahogany fireplace at the left and a bathroom door ajar. Then he looked straight up and saw a stout nurse smiling down.

"Hello," she said. "Feeling better?"

"Oh, God!" Slowly Bill propped himself up on one elbow. "I'm in awful shape, Nurse. Couldn't I have a drink of liquor? Just one?"

The nurse giggled. She glanced toward the mantelpiece.

"Sure you can have a drink. The doctor has permitted you a certain amount every hour"—she counted the little shot glasses full of whisky on the mantelpiece—"and you're seven drinks behind already."

It was a trick. Bill didn't believe it. He looked at the drinks. They looked exactly like drinks. There must be a catch somewhere. Sanitariums never hand out drinks, and certainly never, never seven at a time. He felt that if he staggered out of bed and reached for the liquor the drinks would disappear. He looked at the nurse hopefully.

"I just want one."

"You slept through those seven. You're entitled to them."

She brought two to his bed. He gulped them in turn.

"That's all right now, thanks. I'd like to try to get some food down."

He didn't know where his clothes were or how he got where he was or even *where* he was. He didn't know whether he was in custody or whether his family knew anything about this and he was afraid to ask any questions. He nibbled at a little milk toast and had his third drink. Then he felt drowsy. But his sleep was

stuttery. He dozed a few moments and then awakened violently. He had bad dreams and he could hear someone moaning in the next room. The sound came through the open bathroom door, so he reasoned that the bath was connected with another room on the other side.

He dozed again and suddenly popped upright as a man about thirty with disheveled hair and wearing pajama tops staggered into the room, mumbling to himself. He fell across the foot of Bill's bed. His eyes were open but most of the time only the whites showed. Bill rang for the nurse. She slung the patient's arm over her shoulder and half walked, half carried him back to bed. Bill took his fourth drink.

Then the doctor came in. He was a sunny man.

"Now don't rush this thing, Wister. You can't come off too abruptly. It's a terrific shock to the nervous system and you've got to take it in easy stages."

"Yeah," Bill said. "That's right."

When the doctor left Bill decided that he'd have to get off this one himself. Obviously the therapy at Queen's Retreat consisted of coddling the drunk and keeping him happy. There was no known way of curing an alcoholic, so the next best thing was to keep him in the sanitarium as long as possible by making him like the place. And that could best be done by permitting him to drink—at seventy-five dollars a week plus five dollars a day for "medicines."

He rang for the nurse and told her that he would want very little liquor from now on. "I'm beginning to take some food and keep it down. Tomorrow I want no liquor. I've got to get out of this place."

The next morning he got out of bed and staggered up and down the room like a punchy fighter between rounds. He felt better and ate better. The following day he ate in the sanitarium dining room with babbling patients. Then he tried walking around the grounds outside. He told the nurse that he wanted no more sedatives. He had a fear of them. He knew vaguely that they can kill, and besides, they made him feel hung over.

He phoned his mother and asked her to get him out. She said she'd see. He sat on the side of his bed, shaky and weak, and heard muffled voices in the next room and people pacing up and down in the hall outside. Soon an elderly fat woman who had been crying came in. Behind her was a younger woman holding a tiny girl by the hand. Bill didn't know who they were.

"My," the old woman said, "you look fine. You haven't been here long, have you?"

"No," Bill said. "A week."

"They say my boy is not going to live." She nodded toward the open bathroom door. "Do you drink like he does?"

"I suppose so."

"You're lucky to come out of it. How long have you been here?"

"A week."

"It's a terrible thing. I can't understand it. You ought to thank God that you're not like him. We tried everything with him. This ought to be a good lesson to you. Maybe now you'll stop drinking."

Bill said nothing. He wished they'd go away. Hours later he heard weeping and wailing and he heard a man ask if the boy couldn't be shipped to a hospital. In a few minutes the crying got louder and then he heard the child screaming.

### 1933

THE SCION of the Philadelphia Wisters was vaguely aware that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had become the new President. If pressed, he might have recalled that there had been a bank holiday and that, in December, the law of prohibition had been repealed. But what he remembered most vividly was the succession of binders and the time he had drunk denatured alcohol and eaten a box of sleeping tablets. His face was almost black when he was admitted to Bellevue Hospital and the doctors said later that his heart had stopped twice.

He promised Louise that he would marry her someday.

*Book Three*

## THE CURE OF THE ALCOHOLIC

1934

THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS were over and Bill came home to his parents sober one night. He took a shower and went to bed. Looking around the room for something to read, he saw a small red book on his night table. He looked at the title and grinned. *The Common Sense of Drinking*, by R. R. Peabody. He knew that his mother had planted this one.

Bill propped two pillows behind him and browsed through the thing from back to front. Then he started to read it from the front. He felt resistive to anything it might say to him. He never liked anything or anyone which brought his weakness into focus.

However, there could be no harm in killing an hour reading some of it. He was alone. No one need know. Then the book began to get his attention. It began to address itself directly to William Wynne Wister. It told him about himself, about his habits, his feelings when drinking, and his feelings when sober. It told him of types of drinking and it told him what problem drinking is.

He couldn't drop it. He read every one of the one hundred and ninety pages. Then he shut the book and carefully placed it on the night table exactly as his mother had placed it. He leaned back against the pillows and thought: That man knows what he's talking about. Peabody was the first author he had

ever read who seemed to comprehend the inner workings of the alcoholic brain.

The next morning at breakfast his mother smiled.

"Did you have a chance to look at that book on your bed table?"

"Yes," annoyed. "Yes. I looked it over."

"What do you think of it?"

"Oh, it's an interesting book, I guess. Of course it has no application to me."

"Did you read it all?"

"I thumbed through it here and there. Read parts of it. It's a book that pertains to alcoholism, Mother, and I'm not alcholic."

His mother told him that Elizabeth had found the book in Boston and learned that Peabody had an office somewhere in New York. She was disappointed in Bill's reaction.

Bill re-read parts of the book from time to time. He felt that Peabody was trying to tell him that problem drinking was a common illness and that he had once been an alcoholic and could cure alcoholism.

He promised himself to remember the name: R. R. Peabody.

1934

BILL GOT OUT of bed. His ears rang with noises that weren't there. His eyes were ruddy and his beard was spiked. His muscles ached, his head clanged and whirled, and his hands shook. He stared out the window at an acre of tenement chimneys and he knew he was in a buck-a-night joint on Twenty-third Street, New York. He had been on this one a week.

Finances came first. He turned up forty cents. He looked at himself. His tie was off but his pants were on. There was an empty quart standing upright by the bed. He didn't like being caught without liquor and money. It was bad to be caught that way. He was scared and worried and afraid that he wouldn't

have the strength to go out and get liquor. Well, he'd have a bellhop do it.

But first there was a matter of getting the money. He sat down on the edge of the bed and tried to figure a way. His parents—no. They had lost plenty in the depression. His father was sixty-three now, his mother sixty. It's not easy to start again at that time. And it is less easy to keep throwing money at a son who uses it as fare to an early grave. They were out. He wouldn't ask Margot. It wouldn't be fair. He thought awhile about his two boys. One was—what? Almost eight? And Charlie was—well, getting bigger.

Now about that money: he couldn't think. He shook with chills one moment and burned with fever the next. He wondered if he was in trouble. Would someone come to arrest him? If so, for what? What had he done? He couldn't remember anything. He felt that he could think better about where to raise some cash if he had a few drinks first. Perhaps it would be better if he sold his topcoat again and got a pint and then came back to the room and had some drinks and tried to think about money. It was the fall of the year 1934; Bill hardly remembered the summer.

He tried to light a cigarette. He had to hold his right hand with his left to do it. The room was damp and smelly and cold.

"Well," he mumbled, "if I get a drink I'll come back here and then I won't have any money for tonight. If I get another bottle, I'll be this way tomorrow. Then I'll have to start thinking again. And the whole thing will begin over again. I know what. I'll call the family. No. That's stupid. That spells trouble. Maybe I'd better call some friends and raise it that way. But who? Who? Name one. There is no who. They know all the excuses. I can't keep thinking up new ones. I'm sick of this whole goddam thing. I'm sick of life. I'm sick of this spinning room."

He threw himself face down on the bed.

"I've got to get out of this thing. Really got to. I just can't take it any more. But how do I do it? Nothing ever worked. I tried everything from psychoanalysis down to that joint where

they gave me all I wanted to drink. So there's nothing I can do. There is no way out. I'm licked. . . . Wait a minute!

"What about that guy who wrote the book? What's his name—Peabody! Sure. Peabody. He's somewhere in town. Oh nuts. What can he do? What makes him any different from all the rest? Nothing. They all had a whack at it. They tried everything. He'll just sober me up and send me home. And then I'll go out and drink again and try somebody else. Besides, I can't see him with my clothes as they are. And I can't shave with these hands. I'm too weak to go wherever he is anyway. Forget it.

"What was I talking about? Am I crazy or something? Why would I want to go to anybody? The hell with them. I don't need anybody. I'll be all right in a couple of days. Maybe if I borrow a little dough everything will straighten itself out. I might be good for a buck or two from the hotel. Maybe I can phone Jack Geary and get money. But will he keep his mouth shut? Why not try Peabody anyway? He certainly described me pretty well. He'll understand how sick I am. I'd better get a bottle first and have a couple of drinks and then get something to eat and *then* phone Peabody. Sure. That's the ticket. Why didn't I think of that before?"

He began to snore. He dreamed that he was running around alone in a city of flame. He could hear giant explosions in all directions and he ran down streets only to see buildings topple outward in front of him; he ran the other way and saw a skyscraper explode almost in his face. He was running, running, running. He ran around a corner and saw a man smoking a cigarette. The man seemed calm.

"How do we get out of this place?" Bill screamed. "We'll burn up!"

"Just calm down. You're all upset," the man said softly. "We'll get out all right. Stick around. I'll show you the way."

The man walked up the street. Bill followed, frightened. He watched for the walls to fall out. They didn't. He looked backward to see walls fall. But they didn't. He walked for a long time behind this young man. They walked higher and higher and

soon they stood on a grassy hill. It was cool and the wind blew fresh. They looked back and down and saw the city in flames. Bill awakened and sat on the edge of the bed shaking. He had been asleep ten minutes.

I'll put on my shoes and go down to the lobby. I'll find out what time it is. This is the end of this thing. I'm sick of it. It all adds up to the same thing. No escape. It's all futile. I'll call this guy up and see if he can help me. I'll tell him plainly that I'm licked. One hundred per cent licked.

He sneaked down into the lobby and over to the side of the phone booth and turned the light on. He couldn't read the names in the directory. He saw a man standing near by and he asked what time it was.

"Ten minutes to seven," the man said.

"Will you help me look up a number?" Bill said.

"Sure," the man said. He looked for "Peabody, R. R." and found it and told Bill that the address was Gramercy Park South and gave him the phone number.

"Thanks," Bill said. He walked into the booth, took the receiver from the hook, and found that he could barely stand. He got out quickly.

Maybe I'd better wait until seven. He'll be in bed now.

He thought too that maybe he'd better get a drink before doing anything so formidable as phoning. Then he decided not to. He went into the booth and put the nickel in the slot and held it there with the tip of his finger. He wished he had a hairpin so that he could get it out again. He argued about letting it go. Then he heard the bell and knew he had, so he called the number. His heart pulsed heavily and as he heard the number buzz several times he hoped that no one would answer. Then a male voice said hello.

"Hello. Is this Mr. Peabody?"

"Yes."

"My name is Wister."

"Yes?"

"Are you the Mr. Peabody that—uh—ah—"

"Yes, I'm the fellow." He had a pleasant Boston accent. Bill relaxed a half notch.

"It's a hell of a time to call you, I know."

"Are you in difficulty?"

"Terrific."

"Are you drinking now?"

"I've been drunk for a week. Up until last night. I haven't had anything this morning yet. I'm very anxious to see you, Mr. Peabody."

"Well, I'll tell you. I'm terribly loaded up with patients today. You don't think you can wait until tomorrow, do you?"

"Tomorrow will be too late."

"Let me look at my appointment book. Just a second." Bill waited. Mr. Peabody came back. "I don't see how I can squeeze you in. I'm absolutely loaded. Tell you what you do. Are you far away?"

"West Twenty-third Street."

"Got any money?"

"Thirty-five cents."

"Hop in a cab and come over. We'll have a cup of coffee."

"I'll be right there."

Bill left the booth worried about a drink. When he got to Gramercy Park and gave the driver the thirty-five cents he began to worry less. He went inside and found that the Peabody apartment was on the first floor right. Mr. Peabody was standing in the doorway. He was tall and slender and had a crew haircut and a long thin face. He wore a sweat shirt and flannels and slippers. Bill liked him. No reason. He liked him right off.

"Come on in," Peabody said.

"I'm awfully sorry I got you awake." Peabody appeared not to notice the ruined façade of the patient.

"Don't bother about that. I'm usually up at this hour anyway. But the maid isn't up yet. Do you mind if we have coffee in the kitchen?"

"No. That's fine."

Bill followed close behind. The apartment was a big duplex.

There was a thirty-foot living room with a fireplace. The furniture was quietly handsome. In the kitchen Peabody poured coffee. Bill noticed that his own cup was only half full.

"Think you can lift that without any trouble?"

"Sure. Thanks."

"How did you happen to come to me?"

"I read your book."

"How did you happen to do that?"

"Someone very kindly left it on my bed table."

"Sounds like a plant."

They laughed.

"It was."

"I guess that's the way most of us come to read those books."

Bill liked that word "us." It confirmed what he had sensed: that Peabody had been a drinker.

"In other words, someone suggested that you read the book and you did. And then some time elapsed and you decided, on your own, that you wanted my help?"

"Yes."

"That's a very healthy beginning. I don't know, nor will I, until I see you two or three times, whether or not I will be in a position to help you. So let's consider that we'll have two or three interviews on a preliminary basis. After that we'll take stock of the various aspects of your case and see what sort of a permanent plan we can develop. Is that coffee too hot?"

"No. Fine."

"You'll have to take this thing in stages. Stage one is for you to get feeling right physically and get your nerves calmed down and get eating again so that you can think normally. Right now you're like a guy with one hell of a toothache. You can't think of anything but your own misery. I have found that the shortest distance between these two points is a hospital. I'd suggest that you go to one. There you'll get care and rest. For the first few nights you'll get a mild sedative."

"Well," Bill said slowly, "I'll tell you. I've been to a number of hospitals already, Mr. Peabody. I think I can get off this one

by myself in a hotel room. Is it absolutely necessary that I go? Do I have to go?"

Mr. Peabody stopped smiling. "You don't have to do anything. If you think you can handle it alone you're at liberty to do so." He sipped coffee. He asked Bill if he'd like some more. Bill said no, thanks. "I'm only suggesting that I feel it would be to your advantage. You can make this first move either difficult or easy for yourself. In my opinion you're picking the difficult way. I have a doctor who specializes in handling the physical side in these preliminary stages. I recommend that you take advantage of his knowledge. Perhaps in a week you'll be out and feeling right and we can begin to go into this thing."

"All right. I think you're right. I'll do it. I'll call the family and see about the financial end of it."

Peabody pointed to a phone. Bill got his mother on the wire. She was surprised and gratified when she heard that he had met Peabody. But she didn't bubble. She had been through too many of these things.

"I think you're doing the right thing, Bill," she said. "Don't worry about the expense at the hospital. When you get out, after you've seen Mr. Peabody again, phone me and let me know what your plans are."

Bill went back to his cool coffee. He felt that he was stepping into something big. He didn't know quite what. He felt that this man was not groping; he *knew* what had to be done and he had it laid out in stages. Peabody phoned his doctor, Walters.

". . . No. He's sober but sick. . . . Wister. W-i-s-t-e-r. Yes. . . . He'll meet you at the hospital under his own power. . . . At ten? Fine. Yes. . . . Admitting room. . . ."

Peabody hung up and handed Bill a five-dollar bill.

"You take this and go on back to the hotel first. Do you owe much there?"

"Couple of bucks."

"Square it up. Don't give a damn how you look. Just jump a cab and go directly to St. Mark's Hospital and go to the ad-

mitting room. They'll have a room in your name. Just tell them you're Dr. Walters' patient. How do you feel right now?"

"Terrible. Mr. Peabody, do you think I might—well, do you think—?"

"Do you need it?"

"Honestly."

"If you go out into the pantry," said Peabody, pointing, "you'll find whatever you want in the cabinet. I'm going to make another call."

The cabinet was full of bottles of liquor. Bill chose rye. He couldn't understand why Peabody trusted him alone at the cabinet. His impulse was to fill a water tumbler. But he didn't. He poured a normal shot and drank it with a lot of water. He thanked Peabody and said good-by.

"If you need anything," Peabody said, "don't hesitate to give me a call. In the meantime you're in Dr. Walters' hands. You're his case while you're there. All you have to do is follow his instructions. When you leave the hospital you will have taken step number one."

Bill paid the hotel bill and went to the admitting room of St. Mark's and his feelings were all mixed up and mounting. He was depressed and exhilarated and his nerves jangled and he was sure that this time it would be different and he felt sick but he felt sure, awfully sure, that he was on his way to something different.

He was.

1934

BILL ADMIRED Dr. Walters. The man was small and fast and hyperefficient. He took the bedside phone out. "You won't want to be phoning anyone the first few days," he said, "and I don't want anyone disturbing you." He said he didn't believe in sedation but he would give Bill a mild sedative the first two nights and he would leave word with the night nurse to increase the amount if sleep became impossible.

He turned Bill on his stomach and called for a hypo. "We've had great success with intramuscular injections of vitamin B<sub>1</sub>. It has a calming effect on the nervous system and it induces appetite." He aimed the hypodermic needle upward and pressed until it bubbled. "I'm going to give you about sixty thousand units." The doctor jabbed.

That was before noon. At 5 P.M. there was a second shot. Astonishingly, Bill slept fairly well the first night. He woke once and wanted to ask for more sedation but he didn't. By noon of the next day he was hungry and couldn't credit the amount of food he was putting away. The toxic shakes began to subside. The next day he felt fine. This was the fastest comeback he had ever made. Dr. Walters came in and took a blood specimen and gave him a physical examination. At the end of the fourth day Bill asked the doctor when he could leave.

"Oh, about three days more. How long have you been drinking like this?"

"Quite a few years."

"I don't pretend to understand a damn thing about the psychological side of alcoholism. My job is only to get you over the physical side of it. I do know something about that." The doctor probed and pressed and thumped and listened and made notes and tests. "How do you feel about doing something regarding your drinking?"

"The same as I did when I saw Mr. Peabody. I'm going to do something about it."

"I don't exactly know what Peabody does. But I've seen patients he has turned out and I have every confidence in him. I don't think you could pick a better man. Now look. I'd like to see you get up tomorrow and go up on the roof and get some fresh air and walk around a bit."

Bill had learned something. Alcoholism was broken into two broad parts: the physical and the psychological. It was Walters' job to make him well physically and it was Peabody's job to find out, psychologically, what made him drink in the first place and to remove the cause.

Bill began to worry about Peabody. Suppose the man refused to take him on? What then? He wondered how he could best impress Peabody and he spent a lot of time thinking of devices to sell himself to Peabody.

He didn't know that Peabody wanted him to feel that way.

1934

IT WAS WARMISH OUT and Bill walked part of the way to Gramercy Park. He felt good all over; his head was up, his spine stiff, and his feet fast. Peabody was sitting at the window. He waved, and waited at the apartment door.

"How you feeling?"

"Fine."

He took Bill's hat and coat and motioned him to a living-room chair facing the window. Peabody sat with his back to the window.

"How did you get along with Walters?"

"I got along well with him. He knows his business."

"He does. Don't you think it was a good idea?"

"Yes, I do."

"You see, I've been through this thing myself. And over the years I've tried many different systems, but this is the only solution. I've received a report from Dr. Walters. There's nothing wrong with you physically. Your liver is all right—not enlarged. Your blood pressure is a little low. You are about twenty pounds underweight. Beyond that you're okay."

Peabody offered Bill a cigarette.

"I'd suggest," he said, "that Walters continue those vitamin injections about twice a week for the next month."

"Good."

"How do you feel about drinking now?"

"Exactly the same as when I last saw you. I want to do something about it but I'm convinced that I can't do it alone. I need help."

Bill suddenly knew why he liked Peabody. He never mentioned

the moral aspects of drinking. He spoke objectively, as though he were discussing the proper treatment for a broken leg.

"Are you sure that, so far as your conscious mind is concerned, you have no reservations about being able to drink in a normal manner? You know the difference between normal and abnormal drinking. We don't have to go into that. If you have any idea that you can take a drink or leave it alone, then you don't belong with me. In that case I'd advise you to go out and try to prove it."

"No. I have no such conscious ideas."

"I want to tell you right off the bat that there is no possible way that you can *ever* learn how to drink normally. In the first place your nervous system is a far different one than the nervous system you had at eighteen or nineteen. It is now poisoned by alcohol and your tolerance is limited.

"When you were young you may have been a heavy drinker but it didn't produce the serious effects it does now. If you live to be a hundred your nervous system will not change from its present attitude. And I cannot give you a new nervous system. Secondly, the basis of your trouble is psychological. And even after we solve the psychological side of your problem you are still going to have to live with a nervous system to which alcohol is deadly poison. So, no matter how well we proceed, you will never, never be able to drink again. I want you to get that straight now. It's an idea you are going to have to take a little time to get used to. You won't be able to accept it offhand."

"Another thing you should understand is that you are going into this thing for your own benefit. You are doing this for no one else. Also it ranks second to none in importance among the tasks of your life. If you work this one out right all other problems, by comparison, are simple. It will take nothing more than average intelligence and a desire to achieve an objective. Hundreds of others have been through this treatment and they were no more gifted than you."

"You must remember too that you will reach a state where you will not want to drink. This idea of forever jumping on the

water wagon is impossible, as you now know. It is a constant state of conflict between jumping on and jumping off. You are always undergoing comparison with others and you feel frustrated and you do not really want to stop drinking at all. Under this system you will find that you can reach a state where you will not want to drink, not because you restrain yourself by will power but because you simply do not wish to drink.

"Whatever will power you use will be applied to following the treatment, not in trying to overcome a drinking habit. The system will take care of your drinking. You just concentrate on taking care of the system. On the other hand, if you should ever have to concentrate directly on trying to refrain from drinking —well, I'll give you some ideas on how to cope with it."

It sounded like utopia.

"As you progress you will have new experiences on a non-alcoholic basis. By the same token the system will become easier to follow as you go along. I expect some reasonable feeling of frustration in the early phases. The really difficult part is the first month. After that the tension will slacken. But there is no short cut. Every phase of this therapy is governed by a time element. You will eventually learn to master your emotions and you will sit, intellectually, in the driver's seat. For a time, however, you will have to direct your mental processes by hand. Later they will operate automatically."

"How long will it take?"

"Well, at the end of a year your new system of thinking will be so automatic that you will have no desire to drink."

Peabody passed out cigarettes again.

"I think I've given you the facts pretty straight. As I see it, a fellow in your position and mine has no alternative but to do something constructive about himself. Think it over tonight. Make up your mind what you want to do and come in tomorrow. If you feel as strongly about it then as you do now I'll take you on."

"There is nothing binding about this association of ours, you

understand. It can be terminated by either of us at any time. If at the end of a month, for instance, you feel that you are not getting anything out of this work, then you should decide whether you want to go on or not. If you are not co-operating properly I reserve the right to tell you so and to withdraw from the case. The success of this thing hinges on mutual co-operation. This is no cat-and-mouse game. No policing. You're on your own. It's up to you to be completely honest. If you aren't the loss is yours."

Bill's feeling, sitting there listening to this tall, thin, slow-speaking man, was that it all sounded just. He felt again that this was the only system of cure and that he was going to do everything he could to help and that he would not try to cut corners. He felt eager to start.

"Now," Peabody said, "let's drop that side of it for the day and get down to essential living. You have no job. What are you going to do for money?"

What had he ever done? "I think the family will help me out until I get a job."

"How much can you get along on?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I wouldn't suggest a furnished room in your case. There isn't enough activity. It's demoralizing. You'll have too much time to think about yourself. What I think you should do is to take perhaps twenty-five a week from your family. You can live on it if you budget properly. There's a new Y.M.C.A. on West Sixty-third Street. Ever been in a Y?"

"No."

"Neither have I. But I hear you get a lot for your money there. You get a clean bed, telephone and mail service, a fine swimming pool, and two big gyms. There's always something doing. I'm not trying to tell you where to live and I don't have alcohol in mind when I suggest the Y. If I were you I'd do nothing for the first month beyond concentrating on this therapy and building up your physical side."

"Now about food. For the first month I suggest that you eat

a good breakfast in the morning at a specified time. I don't mean a cup of coffee. I mean orange juice, cereal, bacon and eggs, and coffee. Do you take sugar with your coffee?"

"Two teaspoons."

"Take four. For lunch I'd suggest a bowl of good soup and something light. You don't have to eat a heavy lunch. I think you should have a couple of glasses of milk and bread and butter and some kind of sweet dessert. Around four o'clock have a chocolate milk shake. Never permit yourself to get an empty, gnawing feeling in your stomach." He smiled. "You know, the kind you get just before the cocktail hour. Eat a good solid dinner at seven-thirty or eight.

"So much for food. I think you should have at least eight hours' sleep at night. Later I want to talk to you about exercise. That I will do after getting Dr. Walters' approval. Oh yes—I think you should buy twenty or thirty good bars of chocolate and eat one or two a day. If you are invited to a cocktail party, and you want to go, eat two of the bars before you go. No man ever wanted an alcoholic drink after chocolate.

"These are simple ABC precautions and I think you should eat the chocolate whether you think it will spoil your appetite or not."

Bill was thinking: He stuffs paper in *all* the ratholes. There isn't a chance of coming back here and saying I was cornered into taking a drink.

The next morning Bill returned and saw Peabody waving at him from the front window. He almost always greeted his patients from there. He liked the view on the park and he always permitted himself about twenty minutes' leeway between the departure of one patient and the arrival of the next.

Bill said that he felt like going ahead.

"Good. Now I want you to read the book."

"I've read it."

"You'll find it at Scribner's. Charge it to my account. I'd like you to read it again and as you read it I want you to underline everything that you think has any bearing on your particular case.

Then bring the book to me and we will discuss those parts. Is there anything you would like to talk about before we go on?"

"Yes. I'd like to know something about what it will cost."

"Well, I have a fixed fee of twenty dollars a visit. However, I always alter it to whatever I think the individual can pay. I never permit the fee to stand in the way of anyone who wants to get well. You have no job. I assume that your family will temporarily pay your bill. And of course you will want to pay them back."

That brought Bill up short. Which is nothing to what it would have done to his father, had he heard it.

"Do you think that twenty dollars is too much for them to pay?"

"Mr. Peabody, they've put thousands of dollars into me already. And their financial position is not too good, as I understand it."

"Do you think they could pay ten?"

"Yes. I think they could and I think that's very fair."

"I'll take your word for these things and ten it is."

Most of the first three one-hour sessions was spent telling the story of Bill's life. He told everything that he could remember. He held back nothing. Often he ran down, and when he did Peabody would throw a question at him and Bill would be off to a fresh start. Peabody didn't try to interpret any of the things he heard—the burning of a kitten on a hot stove, the attitude of his mother, the rabid bite, the camp scene, the beginnings of drinking, the West. Peabody listened, and sometimes he nodded and sometimes he smiled. But the telling of it made Bill feel better. It made him feel like a pious person after confession.

Peabody said that the first part of the treatment was to prepare a daily schedule. This would have to be done each night before Bill retired. "First, take a sheet of paper and write down the hours of the day from rising to bedtime. I want you to plan the time allowance for each item: getting up, shaving, dressing, breakfast, looking for a job in the morning, lunch, looking for a job in the afternoon, exercise, reading, rest period, dinner, evening diversion, shower, and undressing for bed."

"I don't know how I can do a thing like that," Bill said. "I haven't even got a job yet. I won't know what to do with all that time."

"Part of your job will be to find things to do. It may be a little difficult at first, but after a week or ten days it will come easy to you. I want you to do it in the proper spirit. You see, the alcoholic is a disorganized character. He does things in a shoddy manner and he must be taught to plan things so that he has no free time and he must be taught to carry each thing out. Of course this thoroughness must be flexible. It can't be stupid. I do not want you to throw a book down at the moment of 5 P.M., say, and begin exercising because the schedule is written that way. You may be halfway through a chapter. But each night at bedtime you should go back over the previous day's schedule and make honest notes showing where you deviated from the plan and why. Those things are for you to determine, not me." He grinned. "But you don't look like the type of fellow who would cheat himself at solitaire.

"Now I don't want to give you too much to do at the start, but each day I'd suggest that you include one item that you would ordinarily postpone. Got any small debts?"

"A little here and there. Some have been hanging for a long time."

"Fine. You can write letters to these people. Tell them that you're out of a job. Tell them you're looking for one and that you haven't forgotten you owe the money and as soon as you get a job you will write and make some arrangement to pay back. I'd select two of them and tell them you're going to pay them fifty cents a week starting right now."

"I don't know. I'd be scared to write. Some of these people might bring suit."

"No. I doubt that. The very fact that you acknowledge the debt and want to do something about it is all most of these people want to hear."

"How about waiting until I get a few dollars?"

"You ought to start right now."

"All right. I will."

Bill wrote thirteen notes. He didn't want to. But he did. And he promised two that he would remit fifty cents each week. He was astonished to get eleven grateful replies.

For reading Peabody suggested biographies. He thought Lincoln and Washington would be good ones for Bill. At the Y.M.C.A. Bill felt that he was relaxing for the first time. He felt the buoyance of a student who likes the course he is about to take and likes the dormitory and the fellows too. At the end of each session Peabody usually asked if Bill had any questions.

"Yes," Bill said one afternoon. "I noticed in the book that you speak of inheritance, and you say that it plays no part in alcoholism. That seems to work out in my case. No one in my family has ever been a victim. And that's why I'm that much more of a mystery to everybody."

"That's right," Peabody said. "Your condition is due altogether to environment."

"How do you mean?"

"In this day and age most of us are overprotected in our early years. When this is carried to extremes and where the child is overly spoiled and undisciplined it produces a nervous condition which ultimately leads to alcoholism. After all, alcoholism is nothing more than a disease of emotional immaturity. We all develop and grow along three lines: physically, mentally, and emotionally. It doesn't make any difference how old a man is. He may be fifty-six physically and quite adult mentally, but he may be only fifteen emotionally."

"Oh, I see."

They worked together easily and in harmony. Bill felt that he was learning faster than he ever had before. One day Peabody said: "Now look. We're working together now. The whole thing is informal and I'm not a doctor and I have no great dignity. I'd like it if you'd call me Dick and I'll call you Bill."

"All right, Dick," said Bill.

"The tendency of all neurotics, Bill, is to resist certain phases of this treatment. Alcoholics are specialists in avoiding life. Their

aim is to avoid everything that is unpleasant and to try to make what they can't avoid appear to be artificially pleasant. So that the chronic drinker—when he's sober—likes nothing and enjoys nothing.

"Your objective should be to try to work up a great variety of new interests. You have to try these things one by one and it's certainly not necessary for you to like everything. You'll learn that you can't escape all unpleasant things in life, many of which will turn out to be duties. Some of these you will learn to do automatically, and therefore you won't become distressed over them.

"So much for the unpleasant things. As for the pleasant, if you find that there are some of those that you do not like—well, obviously you have no genuine interest in them. For instance there is a wife who wants to go dancing. Dancing is pleasant. Her husband doesn't like dancing. But he'll go when he's drunk because then he doesn't give a damn. However, the truth is that he doesn't like something which most people regard as pleasant. He has no genuine interest in it."

Bill never got to know much of the personal side of Dick Peabody. He got to know the professional side well, and he got to feel a bond of friendship with Dick. But all he knew about the man was that Peabody had learned much in Boston from two noted psychiatrists and that he had married twice.

In following the schedule Bill discovered that what it amounted to was a project in self-persuasion. You forced yourself to do something that you didn't want to do, and you did it often and soon it became easy to do it.

On a later afternoon Dick sat back with the sun in his hair and talked about "thought control." He said it was much greater than will power.

"You cannot produce action without thinking about the action first," he said. "Now I want you to begin thinking of yourself as two selves. There's your intellectual self and your emotional self. This intellectual self is a good self, the logical self. It's your best self. It's the self that brought you to me. It's the self that wanted

to do something about your condition. It should be the directing force in your life.

"Now there's the other self, the emotional self. It is always there and it is right that it should always be there. But this is the side that wants to drink. It is large now. Larger than the intellectual self. But thought control will shrink it down so that it becomes much smaller than the good self. You must reconcile both selves. But you must permit the intellectual side to dominate.

"All of which is positive suggestion. Let's try a little negative suggestion. From time to time you'll have various thoughts which will come in the form of daydreams and an idealization of the past. Please don't forget that, practically speaking, you have yet to experience mature life. Your pleasures and sorrows and even many of your friends and much of your thinking have been tied up with alcohol. These thoughts must be checked.

"And here's how to check them: you may walk into a hotel and hear a song being played. That specific tune, we'll say, reminds you of a hell of a party back in the twenties. You, in turn, will start to relive the party. You should stop that type of thinking as quickly as you can. You should say to yourself: 'Oh yes. I remember all that fun and I remember what followed.' You must consciously shift over to the positive type of thinking and permit the intellectual side to dominate rather than the emotional side, which is now trying to glamorize something that led to misery. You must start to think of Norristown, sanitariums, nervousness, tenseness, and then you will find that the emotional side recedes and the intellectual side convinces you that the party in question wasn't as much fun as you had thought.

"For a while, whenever your mind is diverted like that, you're going to have to switch over to positive thinking consciously. What I mean is, manually. Later the time will come when you won't have to force yourself to do it. The intellectual side will then be big enough to take care of itself."

Dick spoke of conditioned reflexes. He said that if Bill planned to attend a wedding, a dance, a party, or an outing he should know beforehand that they would probably have an alcoholic

association in his mind. To offset this it would be necessary to anticipate it and reason it out before attending. He should make himself realize that excitement, drinking, and possibly boredom would be part of the routine.

"If there is drinking going on, fine. You have anticipated it and it means nothing to you. If you are bored, stick with it. It can only last a few hours and you can afford them. The danger to the alcoholic is that he attends these functions without anticipation; he has forgotten the past; he doesn't think of the future; and he is carried away emotionally with the happenings of the moment.

"Another thing that you must be careful about are certain disagreeable emotions like moodiness and depression and anger. If there are logical reasons for the moodiness or depression or anger, all right. In that case they are natural and all people experience them now and then. But when they come without provocation—ah! Then they are coming from the subconscious levels. The fact that others are drinking and having fun may start it. And the fact that you haven't got your crutch any more may bring on any of the three of them. They come up, you see, through frustration. But each time you must analyze to find out whether this one is an honest emotion or a spurious one. When you recognize the subconscious ones you aren't knocked over by them. You fight them. But if you fail to keep the intellectual self in the driver's seat the emotional self will sit there, and believe me, that means drinking.

"A drinking man goes on the water wagon, let's say. He's been on it three months. He's been fine up to this point but now he feels tense and irritable. That's the emotional self fighting for liquor. One evening he comes home for dinner in a fighting mood. His wife does everything possible to please him but he picks an argument. He complains about the way the house is kept; the children are too noisy; the bills are running too high. He blames his wife for each of these and ends the argument by slamming on his hat and going out and getting drunk.

"Now what has happened? His emotional self has carefully

placed the blame on the wife for the binge which is to follow. On the other hand, let's suppose that the man is following our type of therapy. Will he be any the less tense and irritable? No. His emotional self will pipe up the same unprovoked moods and depressions. But instead of fighting with his wife and blaming a relapse on her his intellectual self will recognize these moods for what they are, and, having once understood their worthlessness, they'll be dissipated. Understand?"

"Yes. I believe I do."

## 1935

THE NEW YEAR CAME and Bill continued his treatments, seeing Dick four times a week. These visits would grow less and less frequent as the therapy progressed, but in the initial stages it was wise not to permit an ex-alcoholic too much time away from Teacher.

Bill began to like living at the Y more and more. He worked out his daily schedules honestly but with a lot of resistance. There was always a tendency to play hooky around the edges. The neurotic, he discovered, wants to sit and be cured by taking a pill. And he is averse to anything that requires effort and achievement on his part.

After about two months of the new year he began to do things that he thought were exciting. He allowed himself two movies a week, for instance. He swam every day. He exercised in the gym every day. He read every day. On week ends he went down to Philadelphia and saw Margot and the children and his father and mother and, most of all, Louise. He took the children for Sunday drives in his father's car and learned that Margot was seeing a lot of a fine Philadelphian named Kinsley. Everyone knew about the psychotherapy. No one mentioned it to Bill, of course. Everyone hoped, and some prayed, that this strange new treatment would work. But, as in the case of a neighborhood boy's pimples, everyone saw, nobody spoke.

He found that his world was expanding incredibly. He began

to read papers with a degree of interest in world affairs. He noticed little blue eagles on the masthead. He read about a broad-mouthed man named Huey Long making windy speeches in the Senate. He learned about old Dr. Townsend and his three million Townsendites, each of whom wanted two hundred dollars a month. Once he heard the unctuous voice of Father Charles Coughlin speaking from the Shrine of the Little Flower. He saw a movie called *Payment Deferred* which starred a fat Briton named Charles Laughton. He wanted a job, and tried to find a job, and found to his mild surprise that there were no jobs.

Bill planned to stay at the Y three months, but it lasted more than a year. It was like a club. He knew a lot of members to say hello to. The place was within his pocketbook range and he got good linen and telephone service.

He enjoyed the visits with Dick. The man was sometimes dryly amusing and he was always interesting. The things he said about alcohol vs. Bill Wister were true and Bill knew they were true without understanding psychotherapy. He had a feeling that every day he accomplished some slight thing and it made him feel satisfied. He paid a dollar a week to two creditors and he felt warm and good about it. Now and then Dick would ask him if he had any thoughts about drinking and Bill said no, not as a regular thing, but that he often thought of the grand times he had had at the Bellevue-Stratford and when he thought that these things would never happen again he was momentarily depressed. However, he boasted softly, his intellectual self was rugged and the thoughts always fled.

"The feeling derived from taking a drink and swallowing it," Peabody said, "is one of self-importance. It's produced artificially. Just as soon as you can find some creative work you will find that you can induce the same self-importance legitimately. Frankly, I'd like to have you find a hobby to fill the gap until you get a job. It will make it that much easier for you; take up the slack."

"The next feeling one gets from alcohol is one of calmness and relaxation. This too can be acquired legitimately. Now the pur-

pose of relaxation is to remove the state of emotional tension from the conscious mind. And alcohol, which is a narcotic, can induce spurious self-importance and spurious relaxation."

"What type of drug is alcohol, Dick?"

"Well, it's really an anesthetic. It's in the same class as chloroform and ether. It's definitely not a stimulant. Tea, coffee, and opium and—well, strychnine are stimulants. Alcohol, ether, and chloroform, as I've just said, are the chief anesthetics. When you take that first drink your self-critical faculties are partially anesthetized. And what happens when self-criticism is dulled? Relaxation comes. Do you follow me, Bill?"

"Sure I do."

"As you absorb more alcohol the self-critical faculties are further deadened and the mucous membranes of the stomach are stimulated and irritated, so that blood rushes to the stomach and induces that feeling of spreading warmth. Drinks also dilate the skin arteries. Now what would that do? It would cause more blood to be required to fill them and that in turn makes the heart beat faster. Right?"

"It's amazing."

"Now if you continue to drink, and you get enough of it inside, the blood stream will carry the alcohol to the lower centers of the brain and the nervous system. Eventually your speech is slurred, your steps falter and, if you carry it far enough, you will induce total anesthesia. You will, as they say, be out like a light."

"However, you started out to relax. If you want to reduce tension there are other ways. They may even seem silly, but I want you to try them. It is achieved by what we call 'formal relaxation.' Please sit in that big easy chair for a moment."

Bill did.

"Now we draw the shades and turn the lights low. Take a deep breath and then relax all your muscles. Let your arms hang down straight out over the sides of the chair. That's it." Peabody began to talk in a soft, flat, monotonous tone. "The chair is holding you up. There is no need for effort on your part. Your legs and arms and shoulders and back are beginning to relax." Dick kept

talking and Bill could feel himself relaxing. There was no kidding about it. He had sat in the chair feeling, at first, half amused, half jackass. But now he felt a positive drowsiness coming over him and soon he closed his eyes to listen. The feeling reminded Bill of that sighing relaxation that comes over a person in bed after he finishes fighting sleep and scratching and squirming and punching fresh holes in the pillow and thinking the wrong thoughts and then comes that delicious, half-conscious moment when the bed feels cool and good and he knows that it is going to happen any moment.

While Bill was in that state Dick said that he was trying to eliminate tension from the conscious mind and then give suggestions which would penetrate the subconscious.

"Tomorrow," he said, "you are going to be more calm, more poised, more relaxed. Your nervous tension is passing away and your desire to drink will pass away with it. Slowly but surely you are building up an integrated personality. As your emotional tension lessens, your capacity to evaluate the problems of reality will grow greater. And as the emotional tension passes away your desire to drink will pass away."

Dick was careful not to give more in one dose than the patient could absorb. When it was over Bill said he wouldn't have believed it could be done.

"It reminds me of that Frenchman," he said. "Coué. That's it. Coué."

"He used the power of positive suggestion too."

"Well, I think it's great."

Dick said that after Bill had a warm bath at night he should give himself one positive suggestion before going to bed. He should say it and remember it. Bill tried it and used it many times. One was: "Alcohol is ruining my life and I'm going to eliminate it forever." Another was: "Alcohol is a mental poison."

Later Dick asked Bill to keep a notebook of tricks of the mind, of devices for rationalizing drinking. And each time Bill got a treatment he was given a slip of paper with typed words on it. Every paper exploded an alcoholic subterfuge. One read in part:

*Stop dwelling on the good times you've had drinking in the past. No matter how hard you try, you cannot reproduce the good old days. You have exhausted the pleasures of drinking. You drink to be happy and it makes you exceedingly unhappy. When you leave it alone you can acquire what you seek futilely when you drink—that is, happiness.*

These were to be read after the pajamas were on. Bill was to read them and think them out. Once understood, they were to be written in the notebook. Writing them out was a device to impress them more firmly on Bill's mind. There were about eighty of these slips of paper and Dick had them so arranged that Bill was amazed to discover that each one in turn punctured his newest rationalization of drinking. No matter how his thinking changed as the therapy progressed, each one hit him at exactly the right time. They always kept pace with his newest excuse for dwelling on drinking. One suggestion went into the matter of relapses once the novelty of the therapy has worn off. Even that one caught Bill just as he was beginning to feel a little bit tired of the treatment. Not truly tired, perhaps. But the dash and verve had gone out of it and now he understood it and there was no longer a mystery to solve.

## 1935

BY DAY Bill tried hard to get a job. There were no jobs except those fragile, back-breaking things that no one else wanted. He was offered one selling encyclopedias on a commission basis, but Dick advised him to turn it down. He thought he had another as salesman for a big tobacco company. The head of it was a bright, enthusiastic man who was going to take on an advertising campaign. He had to wait for the president to come up from the South, but the president was coming up any day and he'd surely approve Bill without question. So Bill went to the office every day to see if the president had arrived, and every afternoon he sat in Central Park and dreamed of how he would

handle the job and what ideas he could furnish and how he would put them over and set the tobacco industry on its ear.

He was seeing Dick about once a week now. After twenty days Bill gave it up. He discovered that he was daydreaming. He also discovered that the bright, enthusiastic man was a clerk with delusions of grandeur. He began to spend a little time with his friend Larry Frohman in Stamford and he spent a lot of evenings with Kate and Art Biddle, who were friends too. Art worked on a horsy magazine and Kate in a department store. They didn't have much money at the time but they had a whole lot of fun and happiness. They could kill an evening with a great deal of relish having themselves a nickel ferryboat ride to Staten Island.

At dinner with the Biddles one night he met Charlie Fullerton, a bachelor with slick dark hair and a lot of get-up-and-go. He showed Bill a wall plug he had devised. It was a simple little electric connection to be plugged into a base connection from, say, a table lamp. Fullerton put it on the floor and jumped on it. It didn't break. Up to that time all plugs had broken quite easily. Fullerton showed Bill another feature of it. It used only half the brass needed by other plugs and no screwdriver was needed to assemble the wires inside of it. That meant a big slice in production costs.

Bill began to enthuse. Fullerton told Bill he liked him and would like him to consider taking over the sales end of the business, when there was a business. Charlie had just devised the thing and made one plug. He would have to rig up a plant and make dies for stamping the parts out and then "sales" could get busy and try to peddle the things. Bill accepted. It took two months of working for nearly nothing to get the little plant in Brooklyn set up and ready.

Late at night, sometimes midnight, Bill walked home to the Y across Central Park. Under the street lamps he could see small trees burgeoning with pussy willows. One night he got to the doorway of the Y and thought: My God, I'd like to have a nice straight hooker of rye! The thought startled him and he stopped

in the doorway. He stood, thinking the thought again, slower each time. My . . . God . . . I'd . . . like . . . to . . . have . . . But why? he thought. What brought that up? I'm tired. It's after twelve. Why should I want a drink now? Well, let's look at it. No use dodging it or forgetting it. The thought has been thought. There must be a reason. In the first place I've been working too hard and I'm down. In the second place I haven't had any dinner. I'm running on nervous energy alone and I'm doing all the things Dick told me not to do. Well, what have I done in the past to give myself a lift? Why, I took a drink. This time I'll go inside and order a couple of glasses of milk and a piece of pie. I'll get some energy that way and then I'll hit the hay and get some rest.

He followed his own prescription.

For the first time in his life Bill had administered to his emotional self a resounding boot in the pants.

He told Dick about it.

"Don't get too cocky," Dick warned. "There will be other times when it won't be quite such a pushover. Keep your eyes open."

The treatment now consisted of elaborations of earlier psychotherapeutic principles and hearty conversations and jokes. Bill and Dick were firm friends now and sometimes they laughed until they held their sides and wept. The treatment was in the carpet-slipper stage.

Bill sometimes saw Louise in New York on week ends, though he didn't have much money to take her places. He was getting small amounts from Charlie Fullerton and twenty-five a week from his mother. Down home he saw the children in a new light. He was aware now that they were people and that they had their personal joys and problems. Billy was nine. Charlie was seven. Both had yellow hair growing forward over their foreheads. Billy had great sad eyes. Charlie was small and fast, quick to smile and to comprehend. Billy felt that Charlie got most of the parental affection. The boy brooded about his father. He thought his daddy should be home with Mommy.

Margot got her divorce in November. Bill didn't contest it. He had a lawyer represent him but there was no trouble. He phoned Margot and congratulated her. He didn't know it—and neither did Margot—but Billy was upstairs listening in on the phone extension. He listened. And hung up. And ran screaming to the nurse, wailing: "It's all over now! It's too late! Daddy is never coming home. Never . . . never . . . never!"

1936

THE FULLERTON PLANT now employed twelve men and Bill was getting seventy-five a week as sales manager. He saw Dick about once a month and Dick told him that he could now drop the daily schedule. In April Dick told him that he was on his own.

"You've progressed far enough to carry on under your own power. If you should become confused at any time I want you to phone me. It would be a waste of my time and your money to have any more fixed appointments. In another year these methods of thought that we've tried will become more and more automatic and will require less and less conscious effort from you."

"The next year is really your postgraduate year. What you do in that time will prove how much you have really learned about alcoholism. I know you will meet situations in which those old habit patterns will return. But you know how to beat them if you want to. You spent thirty-four years acquiring the old thinking habit and only one year acquiring the new. So don't get any premature ideas that you are irrevocably cured."

"Well, Dick," Bill said, "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you've done. You've solved a gigantic problem for me, and besides, you've made it seem like lots of fun."

"I think you're going to do all right," Dick said. "Don't forget: I only showed you how to do the work; you really did it. Why don't you call up some night and we'll have dinner together? I'd like nothing better than to see you from time to time. There may come a time when you may be interested in doing some of

this work yourself, Bill. It's tough work but damned gratifying."

Bill thought Dick was kidding but he wasn't.

"I think you have a type of mind that lends itself to psychotherapy. I think you'd be good at it. I don't often meet a patient with that kind of mind. There's a real need for psychotherapists, Bill. Good men are needed in the field." He smiled a little. "Anyway, give it some thought. If you decide to go into it seriously I'll give you all the help I can. I'll help you and I'll coach you and I might even find a surplus patient or two to send to you."

Bill laughed. "Thanks a lot for the confidence, Dick. I'd have to give it a lot of serious thought. If I ever decide to do anything I'll get in touch with you."

Bill wasn't carried away with the idea of curing alcoholics but it left an attractive impression with him. It was something that might be worth thinking about. He had been sober for a year and a half and he had never felt further away from drinking.

Three weeks later Bill phoned Dick. He wanted to make a dinner date. The maid answered. Bill asked for Mr. Peabody.

"Who's calling, please?"

"Mr. Wister."

"Well, I'm sorry to tell you that Mr. Peabody died this morning."

"He what?"

"He passed away this morning."

Bill felt a violent shock. He wanted to ask questions and yet he felt that the maid was not the person to question. He had never met Mrs. Peabody.

"Will you tell Mrs. Peabody that Mr. Wister called, please? Tell her I'll phone her in a few days."

Bill left the phone booth remembering how Dick always got on the phone with a breezy: "Hello, fella. Howya?" It was foggy and warm out. He walked dazedly, thinking that it could not be true. His loneliness was poignant and he felt that a truly great man had left the scene. He bought a newspaper and saw the obituary.

A week later Bill called on Mrs. Peabody. She was a slender woman of obvious refinement. She sat in the chair Dick had

always used—the one at the window. Bill tried to tell her how much he owed Dick and how much Dick had done for him and how shocked he felt. The lady's voice was soft.

"Yes," she said, "it is awful. Dick was wonderful to me and he was deeply engrossed in his work. We had gone up to our Vermont place. Dick needed a rest so badly. He had had a very bad cold and a local doctor came and said that it had developed into pneumonia and that Dick must stay in bed. Well, he gave Dick some medicine and that night Dick died in his sleep."

Bill told her that he still owed Dick ninety dollars.

"Oh, take your time with that," Mrs. Peabody said. "There's no hurry."

But Bill remembered Dick's training about responsibility and honesty. He paid the entire sum in thirty days.

## 1936

IN JUNE Bill took a wire-company job in New Haven. He misunderstood his orders. The president wanted to know why his company wasn't expanding. He didn't want to know that some of his older employees spent the summer afternoons on the golf course. By October Bill had been fired. He returned to Philadelphia feeling that the only nice thing that had happened to him in New Haven was meeting Mrs. Kay Potter, a tall, slender lady who was very busy trying to juggle a big problem: divorcing her husband.

Bill felt himself falling in love again.

## 1936

NOVEMBER CAME and Alf Landon was smothered in the Roosevelt blizzard. The orchestras were playing "The Music Goes 'Round and 'Round" and Gary Cooper was about to bow into the movie houses with *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. America was sitting up nights playing a game called Monopoly and, according to Frederick Lewis Allen's *Since Yesterday*, by day they were say-

ing: "Knock, knock." "Who's there?" "Eskimo Christian and Italian." "Eskimo Christian and Italian who?" "Eskimo Christian and Italian no lies."

Bill had no time for games. He was busy letting Louise down in the gentle way. This was done by living in New York and writing cool letters to Louise in Philadelphia. The girl had savvy. She caught on quickly and phoned to ask him to come down to Philadelphia for a talk. She met him at North Philadelphia Station with the car. Bill's folks were not at home, so they drove to Chestnut Hill for the futile, cruel conversation with which a dead love always tortures itself.

Louise looked as though she hadn't slept. Her eyes were tired and accusing. They sat down in the living room and Bill began frantically to throw up thought barricades against any possible reconciliation assault.

"I'm sorry about this thing," he said. "I'm in love with someone else." He shrugged. "What can a man do in a case like this? I'm in love and I can't help it. It could have happened to you."

She stared, stricken. She had known it was coming and now here it was and she wasn't prepared. The tears came.

"You've been my whole life," she wailed. "I have no interest but you. We've been through everything together." She dabbed at her nose with a hanky. "I don't see how I can go on, Bill. You've become—oh, I don't know what to say."

He wanted to be sympathetic, but he was afraid that he'd find himself back in her arms again. His feelings were exactly the same as always in a crisis: Get it over with quickly. But the burial dragged out for four hours and Louise was in an almost blind hysteria and sobbed until she couldn't sob any longer, and then she stared at the rug until she had strength to sob again.

She didn't ask who the other woman was. At Chestnut Hill Station she kissed him and he could taste the tears. He felt conscience-stricken on the train and phoned her from New York.

"Do you feel better?"

He couldn't understand the words. She was trying hard to say something, but she sounded like someone strangling and he

thought he could hear the word "better." He apologized and said he was sure that it was for the best and that she would soon have another interest.

That tapped fresh tears.

A few days later his mother phoned and asked him to come to her house for a talk. He knew that she knew about Louise and she implied that she was shocked. So he went down home and sat and listened to her talk and he knew that her arguments were airtight and there was nothing to say in rebuttal.

"I can't understand it," she said. "Here's a girl who has no other interest in life except you. She never thinks of anything but you. She has made sacrifices, she has even taken care of you in hospitals. For the past six or seven years she has devoted every breath to you. She's loyal. She's attractive. She's intelligent. Now how in the name of heaven can you justify this thing?"

"Oh, Mother! I can see how it might look strange to you, but I'm in love with somebody else."

"I might as well tell you something, Bill. Not so many years ago you were married and you had a lovely wife and two children and you presumably fell in love with another girl. So you decided to just walk out of the marriage, and you did walk out on your wife and two children. In some way, I suspect, you've been able to justify it to yourself.

"I'm going to tell you something, Bill, that I've never told anyone. Twice, before you and Elizabeth were ten, I was very much attracted to two men. At that time my life had presented some conflicts and difficulties with your father and I could very easily have permitted myself to be carried away by the attentions of either of these gentlemen. But those things are a part of life. I refused to permit myself to be swept off my feet because I had a definite feeling for your father and a definite responsibility toward you two children.

"Where would you have been today if I had walked out then? I've shown you what I did in such cases. Now suppose you tell me why this walking out has happened to you twice."

Bill looked at her pale attractive face and her snowy hair and he smiled and shrugged. He had no answer.

"I'd suggest you give it some thought," she said.

"But there's nothing to think about, Mother. I've made the decision."

"I think you've made a great mistake."

## 1936

AT THANKSGIVING TIME Bill decided to go into psychotherapy. It wasn't an easy decision. He had argued with himself about his lack of experience, but then he had reasoned that everyone must begin without practical experience. He met Jim Bellamy, a psychotherapist who had known Dick Peabody and who had the forceful drive and the grandiose ideas needed to push Bill head over heels into curing alcoholics.

Yes, he said, he agreed with Dick. Bill should go into psychotherapy. Jim said that there was plenty of room for more men in the field. America had three million chronic alcoholics to cure and most of them were staggering from sanitarium to sanitarium being dried out and set free with no attempt on the part of medicine to find out what made them drink originally. Jim said he had too many patients to care for and that he'd be happy to send some to Bill.

Bill left Jim feeling that he should take the step. He phoned Mrs. Potter in New Haven and asked her what she thought. She thought it was grand and said he ought to begin immediately.

He took a small apartment in Gramercy Park around the corner from Dick's old place, a one-room flat with a closet-kitchenette. Bill worked hard outlining a course of therapy for the patients who would come. Jim introduced him to some doctors who promised to send cases to him after they had been cleared up physically. Bill said he wouldn't touch a case that hadn't been okayed by a doctor.

Before Christmas Jim phoned. It was four-thirty in the afternoon and Jim was a fast talker.

"I've got this case, Bill. Haven't got enough room for him. Can't afford to pay much, understand. 'Bout three dollars. Fellow's in my office now. I don't know much about him. If you say the word I'll send him down."

"Thanks, Jim. I'll have a talk with him. Has he been drinking?"

"A few, but he's all right."

"Okay."

"I'll send him right down."

"Thanks."

Bill got off the phone and began to worry. He paced up and down and planned exactly what he was going to say to the patient and how he was going to say it. He worried about what kind of man the patient was. He thought up six or seven specific questions he would ask the man. He wondered what kind of an alcoholic background this fellow would have. Then he rearranged the chairs so that he could sit close enough to the patient to be friendly and not close enough to make him uncomfortable.

This was the first patient and it was important to get a good start. He worried and paced and paced and worried and then he phoned Jim Bellamy.

"Where's this man Ross you were sending down, Jim?"

"Isn't he there? Left here five minutes after I hung up."

"Oh, oh! How was he when he left?"

"He was okay, Bill."

"Well, I'll wait a little while."

It was 7 P.M. when the downstairs buzzer rang. Bill picked up the receiver and growled: "Send him up." Then he waited. And waited. The minutes went by. Bill thought he heard a scratching sound against the door. He flung it open and grinned and said: "Hello. How are you?"

The young man was tall and skinny. His eyes looked as though they had recently died. Slowly, inexorably he leaned forward like a pine on its way down. Then he fell on his face on the rug. Bill picked him up and propped him in a chair. Mr. Ross went into a crying jag. Nobody loved him. Nobody wanted him. "Isn' 'is

awful, Mizza Wizza?" Bill suggested that Mr. Ross go home and dry out.

"Aw no ya don't!" roared Ross. "Nuthin' doin'. Om here and Om ready to start. Thass what Om here for."

Bill listened to the man for a half hour. Then he cabbed him uptown to a Mrs. Ross-to-be. She was pretty. Net loss for the evening: two dollars and sixty cents.

## 1937

BILL BEGAN to get a few patients from friendly doctors. These alcoholics had been mended physically but had no idea what impelled them to drink nor when the next bender would begin. He liked the work and kept detailed case records. One night he sat down and wrote two letters. He knew one Philadelphia layman who was in alcoholic psychotherapy. Francis T. Chambers. He was a few years older than Bill, a tall, soft-spoken intellectual. Chambers had made an enviable mark in the profession. He was the first lay therapist to convince the men of medicine that his services could be used in a hospital.

Dr. Edward A. Strecker, the renowned psychiatrist of Pennsylvania Hospital, had watched Chambers' work with approval and had convinced the board of directors at the hospital that Chambers should be brought into the hospital, given the title of associate in therapy, and used to the advantage of the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Bill had met Strecker some years before, and he wrote notes to him and to Chambers, advising them that he was now practicing in New York and hoping that he and Chambers could exchange ideas from time to time. He got two encouraging letters by return mail.

Margot phoned to say that she had remarried and was off to Europe on a wedding trip, and the children were going to spend some time at the home of her people. Bill wished her a great deal of happiness and meant it.

More patients began to call. Jim Bellamy phoned to say that

he was leaving on a summer trip and asked if Bill could take on seven of his patients. Bill said yes. He had sixteen of his own and, with Bellamy's seven coming in June, Bill had twenty-three going at once. Some were new and visited every day. Some were older and came twice a week. Some paid ten dollars a visit. Some paid two. Some were co-operative and some were there because relatives threatened them with sanitariums if they didn't go. There were bright ones and dull ones, women as well as men. The youngest was a society matron of thirty. The oldest was a banker, fifty-eight. There was a butler, a clerk, a housewife, a charity promoter, a bond clerk, a glamor boy, a manufacturer, a minister, a Negro doctor, and a broker. They came and went. Bill listened and talked, but he did more listening than talking. He worked so hard that he skipped lunch and had dinner in bed. He heard so much heartache and frustration that he began to hear only the integral parts of lives in the listening. He explained his therapy in simple terms and put the patients on schedules and paced them through the ABCs of Peabody.

Fees poured in and Bill took larger quarters upstairs. Now he had a big living room with a fireplace at one end, a big bedroom, a foyer, a big kitchen, and a French terrace where he checked case histories and perspired in the hot-rock-and-tar breezes of New York. He weeded out those who visited only to listen and smirk. When patients began to sober up in batches and remain sober he was not surprised. They all read Peabody's book and they all wrote down what it meant to their individual cases.

Mrs. Potter got her divorce and came to New York to take a job in a department store. She was very much interested in retailing and determined to learn the business. She had verve and dash and the confidence of a person who can't lose.

One of Bill's current patients was a young man about Park Avenue whose parents owned a big place on Long Island. His name was Frank Baker and he was amiable and sympathetic and about thirty-six—Bill's age. Bill visited the Baker summer home on several week ends that summer. He went down on Saturdays and got a Sunday-night train back to town.

The Baker place was a dream. Bill and Frank and several others spent the morning knocking around the beach club and had lunch there. In the afternoon Bill played tennis. There was a lot of drinking going on, but Bill felt no temptation to "have just one." He met a lot of people there and liked them. Then the word got around that he was an authority on alcoholism. So far as they were concerned there was no difference between a psychotherapist, a psychologist, a psychoanalyst and a psychiatrist. They were all the same and they all spelled wisdom regarding the dark doings of the human mind.

These people asked Bill's opinions on many matters. He got into the habit of listening gravely and nodding and offering advice and helping them to reach decisions. They asked about husbands and wives who were drinking too much and Bill told them what to do. Others who hadn't met him wangled introductions and threw their problems at him and weighed his magic solutions. Some even asked about the advisability of getting a divorce. They felt that there was no domestic question he couldn't answer, because he had a unique knowledge. He was sure that they wouldn't dare to challenge his solutions.

There were jokes too. Often, when a man passed out at a party, someone would yell: "Hey! Call Wister!" A man, obviously hung over, came out of the beach club bar with an old-fashioned in his hand. He saw Bill walking toward him with a party of friends. Very elaborately he assumed a stricken look, palmed the drink, held his arm behind him, and backed up into the bar the way he had come.

The adulation of the resort crowd began to unhorse the therapist. He continued to work as hard as ever on his cases, but he enjoyed the adulation of society so much that he found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his work when Monday rolled around. One Monday morning he sat thinking about it. He had recently advised an elderly woman to have her daughter get a divorce. It worried him. Why had he done it? What did he really know about the case? What did he really know about anyone's domestic troubles?

Why can't I get myself together on Mondays? he thought. Why must it be so difficult to concentrate? I know. I'm being carried away by this thing. I've got a ridiculous, stupid idea that I'm a Dr. Cure-All. I've given advice that involves the personal lives of people. With good intentions, perhaps. But what does that matter? I have no business giving such advice. Just because I've experienced alcoholism is no reason why I should get the idea that I'm a trained psychiatrist. The best thing I can do is stick to alcoholic work. Stick to it strictly and not even talk about it on the outside.

And while we're on the subject of alcoholism, while I know more than the man on the street, I still know very little about it. And yet I discuss it as though I'm an authority. Come to think of it, the way I've been permitting myself to feel on Long Island is exactly the way I felt when I came back home after the war and accepted the worship of Philadelphians while I strutted up and down in a uniform. Those two points may fit into some sort of pattern. He popped up in his chair. By God, I believe there is a deeper structure to this whole subject than I've discovered! The mere cessation of drinking does *not* mean that the patient is cured of alcoholism! The mere cessation of drinking does *not* mean—there's much more to this subject than I ever dreamed!

Well, what will I do about it? Maybe I'd better quit this therapy and get some training in psychology. But where will the money come from? I've got to have money to do these things. Yes, and what about the patients? I can't dump them out in the cold just because I've suddenly discovered that I know very little about a subject. They believe in me. They're depending on me. Well, what *can* I do about them? They're all doing well. I've had no relapses yet. I know one thing. I'm going to devote at least one hour a day to study. Maybe I'd better keep going with the patients anyway. It would be dangerous to drop them.

He phoned Jim Bellamy and asked him to recommend a good book to read on psychology. Jim advised a certain synthesis of abnormal psychology. That, he said, would be good for a beginner. Bill bought it and after reading a few paragraphs felt that

he must be dumb. The book was so complex that it made his head spin. What he needed to start was elementary psychology. Later he could grow to understand abnormal psychology.

One day in September he got a letter from one of his patients. It read:

DEAR BILL:

*In the following pages I shall try to describe the benefits of the Peabody treatment as they appear to me after approximately four months of sobriety. There is one outstanding feature, which is peace of mind regarding alcohol. This, to me, is the most important objective gained and it is a mental state which I had thought was practically impossible. My experiments with the wagon had been unfortunate and unsatisfactory and gave me very little relief from the chronic mental strain that I was under.*

*I knew in my heart that alcohol was a poison and I had suffered so much at times that I swore I'd never take another drink if I could only get over this particular bat without jumping out of a window or having my heart stop. I felt that the whole world was against me and I trusted nothing but the bottle and, at times, even that was beginning to fail.*

*Having watched my friends collapse one after another from booze, I wasn't under the slightest illusion as to just where I stood. And yet I hated to admit that I could no longer take it as I had taken it for quite a long time. All the time I was on the wagon I wished I was off and yet I dreaded taking that first drink because I knew what the result would be.*

*The new relief of not wondering where the next drink is coming from or what is going to happen to me next repays me tenfold for the small amount of effort needed to see alcohol in its true light and to realize the complete stupidity of sacrificing one's friends and one's life for a literal hell on earth. On the other hand, I am so convinced of the power and the fascination of the drug that I can conceive of a series of circumstances which might lead me to say, "Oh, what the hell!" and shoot the works. These circumstances have no concrete form in my brain, but I cannot,*

*having a good understanding of human nature, completely eliminate the possibility. The shock would be too great if I eliminated the possibility and then failed.*

*At any rate there is no longer a conflict going on in my brain as to whether or not to try to beat the game. I have completely isolated the subject so that I can look at it objectively. In the past it was always a part of me and therefore more difficult to handle.*

*The second most important result is the benefit to my nervous system. While drinking I was always one jump ahead of a fit and my short periods of abstinence did not give my system a chance to get built up. I am convinced that it takes a minimum of six weeks to get your system in such shape that it can devote itself to its normal functions and take its eye off the nerve conduits.*

*Thirdly, with my nerves in better shape, my brain is no longer completely absorbed with how I'm going to feel under certain circumstances and I find that I can take the good and the bad breaks more or less in my stride. Fourth, as a result of nerve relaxation I have been able to build up a certain amount of self-confidence. It is like getting rid of crutches after years of dependence. The first few steps are shaky, but you are soon amazed at what you can do without a bottle to lean on. In the old days every issue was faced with a couple of swigs.*

*Fifth, the relationship between me and my relations and friends is decidedly better. I enjoy life and it is reflected in the attitude of my family. The unfortunate thing about dealing with alcoholics is that the dirty work always has to be done by the family and they are the last people in the world who should do it as their emotions are all registered on the supersensitive alcoholic whose tormented brain distorts facts with the result that barriers are built up where they don't belong.*

*The only difficult part of the treatment is finding a substitute for the excitement created when drinking. It is like trying to find a pinch hitter for Babe Ruth in the twenties. Everything looks a bit flat at first and I found myself amazed by the humdrum reality of life. However, I now find myself enjoying things which I had not believed possible to enjoy without the soft alcoholic haze*

*which surrounded everything when I was under the influence.*

*I never miss the stuff and hope to heaven that I never get tangled up with it again. I could write forever on the subject of alcohol but find that it is time for my morning coke so will close.*

FRANK

Bill turned the letter over in his hand. He put it back in the envelope and placed it in his inside pocket. No, he wouldn't quit therapy now. He would study hard and learn and he would treat Frank and all the others as he learned. He wouldn't quit therapy.

He couldn't.

DISILLUSIONMENT

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1938

BILL BEGAN, in the early months of this year, to appreciate what he did not know about alcoholism. He began to see the subject for what it really was—a fascinating mystery. He pictured it as a great box inside which reposed smaller and ever smaller boxes, each inside the next larger one. He had unlocked the first great box. They had found a key in the form of a channelized thought pattern. This key had helped the alcoholic to quit drinking. But they had not seen the next smaller box, the one which would unlock the tiny core of the inner man and tell the therapist the reason *why* the patient had to drink in the first place. Nor did he know that the next smaller one would determine, quite accurately, at what age the alcoholic becomes predestined to the use of the drug. And the next smaller box, the one which tells us what can be done to prevent alcoholism before the child reaches adolescence—that one was hardly in the dream stage.

But Bill, a layman racing around the sutured edges of organized medicine, wanted to find the keys and find them quickly. He made mistakes and he knew that he would make more mistakes. But he didn't care about those if only he could find those keys. He got books on psychology, one on abnormal personalities, another on various types of insanity, one on psychopathic states, one on the psychology of adolescence, a syllabus of psychiatry, and one by Strecker and Chambers on alcoholism.

Bill got very little out of the profound ones. They confused him. He studied case histories and symptoms and tried to fit his patients into the neat categories of symptoms but none of the patients seemed to fit. He was in a psychological house of mirrors. Everywhere he turned he saw only his own reflection.

Bill saw as much of Kay as possible. He phoned her every two weeks and visited her once a month. The romance had reached a stage where it could neither advance nor retreat. Bill felt that he was too busy for romance. The truth was that he always relished romance while it remained in the apple-blossom stage with music by Jerome Kern, but his ardor died when his studies became intense.

He got new cases to treat and was acquiring a reputation with a large group of doctors in New York. His strictest rule was that he would not take a case unless it came from a doctor and unless he consulted with the doctor and got assurance that medicine had done all it could for the patient. He felt that a closer tie with medicine was now in order; he would try to win an appointment to some psychiatric hospital, as Francis Chambers had done in Philadelphia.

First he joined an organized research group in New York. This was an association of hundreds of doctors who met irregularly to exchange ideas on alcoholism. He made it a point to listen sagely and to permit himself a nod here and there but to say as little as possible. It was there that he met Dr. Luigi Albanese, a psychiatrist on the staff of the Wagner Institute in New York. Albanese had been working on a paper on alcoholism and asked Bill to look it over.

Bill did better. He contributed ideas to it. He visited the hospital and became friendly with Albanese, a fat, dark man with a mustache like a nylon toothbrush. They agreed that the trouble with treating alcoholism in psychiatric hospitals was that, after months under supervision, the patient is sent home and too often he isn't prepared for the sudden switch-over and goes right back to drinking. The patient needed something to bridge the gap between hospital and home and Albanese was sure that, if the

patient was discharged from the hospital and visited Bill regularly, it would keep many patients from reverting to liquor.

Bill tried it. He took a few of Albanese's discharged patients and they worked out well. He met these patients in the hospital before they left, and got to know them. Then, when they were discharged, he not only knew all about the case but the patient felt that he was visiting a friend he had known in the institution. Thus Wister, in their minds, became the link between the hospital and the outside world. There were no relapses.

Later Bill asked the doctor what he thought of the idea of his becoming a lay therapist on the staff. Albanese thought it was fine.

"Tell you what you do, Bill. Go see the head psychiatrist, Dr. Edmund. I think that if you put the case up to him in the right way he'll be receptive. God knows he should be. We've had too many outpatient crackups around here."

Bill got an appointment to see Dr. Edmund in his hospital office one morning at eleven-thirty. He was excited about it and knew that this was going to be an important moment in his life. This was his chance to legitimize his position in the world of alcoholism, a chance to be associated with a recognized hospital. This was his big goal.

Some people were waiting outside Dr. Edmund's office. Bill paced up and down the reception room for several minutes. Then he saw a tall man in a camel's-hair coat—an obvious Park Avenue doctor—coming down the corridor, bowing slightly with the good mornings and heading directly for the private office. The doctor glanced briefly at the faces in the reception room and went inside. A moment later a buzzer rang. His secretary disappeared inside. She came out smiling and nodded Bill in. The doctor was sitting behind his desk.

"Sit down," he said. "What can I do for you?"

Bill had thought over all the approaches to the subject and now this was it and he had to talk and talk well.

"Dr. Edmund, I've been working as a psychotherapist in alco-

holism for the past few years. I've done quite a good deal of work with cases sent to me by doctors both here and in Philadelphia." Dr. Edmund was riffling through the morning mail, glancing at the envelopes in turn. "And I've had reasonably good success. I found in a number of cases, where it has been necessary to send a case to a good institution for treatment in a protected atmosphere, that it is quite a jump for the case to come from the institution to the outside world." Bill's voice was strained flat. "Now, where the case has been able to come directly from the institution to me, it has acted as a good steppingstone.

"I met your Dr. Albanese at the research group meeting and he has sent several outpatients of his own to me. I wonder how you'd feel about starting out on some such basis, provided you think that the idea is a good one. Later on, if it works out as I believe it will, perhaps you'd consider a plan whereby I might be permanently attached to the staff of your hospital as associate in therapy, working on the outside."

Dr. Edmund had stopped working on his mail. He was sitting hunched forward now, with his elbows on the desk blotter. His face was growing redder and redder and then it began to purple.

"You speak of Dr. Albanese," he snarled, "as though he was the only psychiatrist in the world. I am the head of a large institution with nineteen psychiatrists working under me!" His deep voice began to boom like the breaking up of a log jam. He rose and paced up and down and his voice got louder and deeper.

"Why, I have a board of directors of fifteen prominent men in this city! What do you think my board of directors would think if I told them I was going to turn cases over to a layman?"

Bill saw that Dr. Edmund was losing control. There was nothing to do but sit it out. "I don't know," he said softly. "What would they think?"

The doctor threw both hands high in the air. "Good God! You ask what they'd think? This is preposterous! I never heard anything like this in my life! Give me one good reason why I should even consider such a thing!"

"The best reason I can think of is that you are not curing your cases in the institution and they are breaking down on the outside."

"That," roared Dr. Edmund, "is your opinion!"

"I'm sorry, Doctor. I have proof."

Edmund walked to his office door and opened it. The people in the reception room stared.

"You have my decision," the doctor said. "Now I have no more time."

Bill got up and walked out.

"I'm sorry that this thing has upset you so, Doctor. I didn't come here with that idea."

"I'm not interested in your ideas!"

Bill walked along the corridor and down the stone steps and through the lobby and down the front steps and onto the sidewalk. He was angry. He remembered everything that he had said and everything the doctor had said. He had never seen a psychiatrist with so little control. Then he thought that perhaps he had been shooting too high. After all, Edmund had been in the business many years. Bill was new to it. He thought and wondered about it and he went back to his private therapy. He had had his first encounter with monastic medicine and he sat home and licked his wounds.

1938

SUMMER CAME AGAIN and so did Long Island. This time he was wary of dispensing advice. His novitiate was over and he played when he was supposed to play and worked when he was supposed to work and didn't mix them. He still saw Kay and he still felt that what little romance he had time for belonged to her.

He had eleven patients calling steadily. He was learning all the time and one thing he already knew was that he had taken on too many patients the previous year. Surprisingly, all had done well. None had relapses and Bill was now sure that his patients would

never go back to the bottle. He was pondering this phenomenon when he learned that one of his male patients was out on a wild bender at the moment. That was relapse number one. He had hardly managed to think about it when he heard about the second. Then the third. It frightened him. He didn't know whether to call it a coincidence or to look up the phase of the moon for that night. Two more went bad.

All were men. Two were new patients who went completely haywire and never returned. The other three eventually went to hospitals for dry cleaning and pressing and came back to Bill chastened and firm of heart and shaky of hand. He was curious about the relapses and did a lot of research on it. In each case he found that magnifications of small frustrations at home had headed them back bottleward. He began to learn how to cope with relapses and how little they really meant in terms of long-term cure, and after that, when a patient relapsed, he tried hard to find the true reason for it, then brought it to the patient's attention so that the man could see it plainly and would never again relapse for that particular reason.

In the late fall Bill discovered a man who had been dead a year and a half—Alfred Adler, the father of Individual Psychology. Adler, the gentle Viennese, was the answer to almost every question Bill had propounded.

As the year 1938 ended Bill took stock of what he had done since he had begun therapy. He had interviewed seventy-eight prospective cases. He had accepted fifty-nine and rejected nineteen. Most of the rejections had been for lack of co-operation. Three had been turned down because their physical checkups revealed paresis. The cases had come from various walks of life. Half had better than average incomes. About ninety-five per cent of all cases proved to have been pampered and overprotected. Five per cent were early-neglect cases in which the child felt that he wasn't wanted. Most of the patients turned out to be either the youngest or the oldest child in the family. Ninety per cent of all patients were men. About five per cent came from families which had at least one other chronic alcoholic.

All had begun to use alcohol between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. A few had become problem drinkers within two years. Others had slipped down to problem drinking over a period of eight or ten years or even longer. All were parasites. They leaned on families or friends for money and expected hurry-up help when they got into trouble. Bill began to notice that there are degrees of severity in alcoholism. In following this, he was astounded to discover that there is a direct ratio between the degree of alcoholism and the degree of pampering or neglect in early childhood. He had unlocked another box.

1939

IN THE SPRING he enrolled for a course in abnormal psychology at a local college. The curriculum consisted of theoretical studies in class in the morning and practical studies in the afternoon at a hospital near Greenwich. In school he learned types of insanity. The class was never told why people became insane, only that certain people are psychotic and these are the manifestations.

At the afternoon sessions in the hospital Bill met Dr. Emmanuel Quigley, the instructor. He was short and bald and looked like a pink Easter egg. He sat the eighteen students at desks and had the insane brought in one at a time. For each type of insanity he had a male patient brought in first, then a female. He lectured quietly and lucidly in the manner of a man who has done this many times before. He brought in a man paranoiac and explained the case from a chart, telling how long the man had been in the institution and what he had done that brought him there originally. Then he'd ask the class if they would like to question the paranoiac—provided the patient was amenable to questions. A few questions were asked but the man stared scornfully. He was taken away and a woman paranoiac came in. Her eyes were alight with venom. A girl student asked her why she was in the hospital and the patient screamed: "Those sons of bitches killed my mother and they've been following me for years trying to kill me!"

A male schizophrenic was brought in. He sat silently, withdrawn from society and with no intention of coming back out. Bill guessed that this man had probably been the oversensitive shy child who had lost courage. He noted that there are times when every one of us wishes he could climb down a deep hole and pull it in behind him. He thought that perhaps insanity itself, taking in all types, came from early fears and repressions in which the victim isolated himself more and more and confined himself to smaller and ever smaller channels of existence until he found himself in an alley in which he could no longer move. He felt sorry because he was sure that the insanity had resulted, in each case, from a series of childhood misunderstandings. This in turn made him realize that bringing up children is a weighty problem for parents. And that led Bill to believe that if we are to cut the numbers of our insane we must first educate the parents.

A woman patient, paranoiac, in her early forties, was now on exhibition. Bill listened to the girl student who sat in front of him, throwing joking questions at the harassed woman.

"What makes you think all these people are after you?" she asked.

"They're all hanging around my window at night."

"You just think they're out there."

The patient refused to answer. The girl pupil turned toward Bill and grinned.

"She's nuts all right."

"What are you doing in this class?" Bill said.

"I'm a social worker."

"Well, you're just taking advantage of that woman. You're just showing off."

"I'm not nuts."

"That's why you shouldn't be taking advantage of her. You're well. She's sick."

The pupil shrugged and turned back toward the front of the class.

After class Quigley asked Bill if he would like to see some of the twenty-five alcoholics in the hospital. He gave Bill a lot of

charts. Bill studied them and said that he would like to interview two. The first one was Joe Gibson, fifty, who had been a dishwasher. He had Korsakoff's syndrome, which results from physical damage done to the brain cells after many years of alcoholism. The main symptom is a real disorientation as to time and place. Gibson had been in the hospital eighteen months. He came into the room, a gentle, smiling man in a wheelchair.

"How long have you been here?" Bill said.

"Why, night before last I was playing cards at my brother-in-law's and some fellas came in and asked me if I wanted to take a ride. I said sure. So they brought me here. Yep. Night before last—Saturday."

This was Wednesday.

"What is this place we're in right now?"

There was a long pause.

"Is it a hotel?" He pondered hard for a while. "Fella tells me it's an institution."

"What month of the year is it, Joe?" It was April. Joe thought hard on that one. "Is it December?"

"I'm asking you."

"Okay. Maybe it's July."

Bill questioned him about things that had happened a long time ago. Later he checked the record and discovered that Joe's recollections of long-ago things were perfect, above average. Joe had been drinking for thirty-two years. He was in the wheelchair because he had alcoholic neuritis. He also had foot drop, which means that the motor nerves of the leg muscles were damaged and couldn't keep the foot from sagging downward when it was lifted for the next step. Alcoholic neuritis usually comes from prolonged drinking with low vitamin intake. Result: the muscles atrophy, somewhat as they do in infantile paralysis. Treatment sometimes stays the progress of Korsakoff's syndrome and alcoholic neuritis, but there is but little chance for improvement.

The second patient was Arthur Rossman. He was thirty-two, married, and separated from his wife. He was the youngest of six

children and was built like a short bull. Quigley saw Rossman's name on Bill's sheet.

"You won't be able to see him today," he said.

"Why not?"

"He won't appear unless he has his new blue suit on. He likes time to dress up. I'll have him ready for you next time."

When Bill met Rossman he was dressed and anxious to make an impression.

"How long have you been in here, Arthur?"

"Little over a year."

"What happens when you get out?"

"Oh, I try to do the right thing, I guess. But people are always upsetting me. It makes me nervous and I have to drink to calm myself." He dusted specks from his pressed trousers. "I have phobias too. I'm frightened of subways and crowds. The alcohol keeps these things from me." He looked at Bill and smiled sadly. "No one has any interest in me. My family is trying to keep me in here. They don't want me to get out. On the other hand, suppose I *do* get out? Then I'll start thinking about being confined to a mental institution and that will prey on my mind and I'll have to drink again to forget it."

He talked slowly, his voice very soft. He had a command of words and he had the diffident attitude of a young man who hopes he is among friends. He seemed to know all about all the other patients. He knew the types of insanity. He was inordinately friendly with all the older nurses and everyone loved him and called him Little Arthur. At staff he starred and matched wits with the psychiatrists and used the biggest words.

Later Quigley showed a lot of interest in Little Arthur.

"Wister, do you think you can help this fellow on the outside? We think he needs help. Sometimes he is out of here only an hour or two before he gets roaring drunk. Something ought to be done for him."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Doctor. I don't want to commit myself yet. I don't know enough about Rossman. But I'll have

two or three talks with him and then I'll get together with you and talk the whole thing over."

"Of course you know, Wister, that this is a charity case."

"I know."

Bill got the complete Rossman report. His mother had died of cancer when he was twenty-one. His aunt had also died of cancer. His father was now sixty-five and had hardening of the arteries and heart disease. Arthur had a great many childhood diseases. The report said that he recalled that his mother was always worried about his health and how he felt. He said that his father was always stern, threatening, and distant. He said his mother was "so interested" in him that on only two occasions of his life did he recall her being out of the house after 6 P.M. Once was to attend a wake; the other time was to attend a special church service. When his mother died he had wandered on the streets in a daze for two weeks.

He admitted to temper tantrums and said they always got results. He made one statement several times: "I'm not listed here as an alcoholic, you know. I'm a psychoneurotic. I only use alcohol as a stabilizer."

When Bill had a second talk with Arthur he was affable and more relaxed.

"All I really need to get well, Mr. Wister, is a job and a few breaks."

"Haven't you had them before?"

"I've had the jobs. But never the breaks. A man has got to get the breaks too. Now if I could only get a job and the breaks, and someone would give me permission to carry a bottle of bromides with me all the time—why, I'd be all right. Of course you already know what's *really* wrong with me. I'm a victim of the Oedipus complex—a mother fixation."

"Do you read many books on psychology?"

"Psychology and psychiatry. All I can lay my hands on. But the doctors here won't let me have them any more. They say I'm going to get all mixed up. I read cowboy stories for relaxation, but I like the psycho books best."

He said he had slept in the same bed with his mother until he was fourteen and that she had bathed him until he was fifteen. Embarrassment had made him stop both. Later he met a girl and his mother offered him fifty-five dollars in cash—all she had—if he'd give her up. Still later he went with a girl whom he didn't really care for, but she became pregnant and the girl's family promised Arthur an annulment if he would marry her. His mother and father begged him to marry the girl. "It's the right thing to do," they said. So he did. When he asked for an annulment the girl's family convinced Arthur that it would make his baby illegitimate. He never got the annulment.

Arthur resented his older brother because he was as threatening and unforgiving as his father. With a little show of reluctance he admitted that he used to play his mother against the rest of the family and he had been sure that he could outsmart anyone at any time.

Bill felt willing to take the case, but he wanted a final opinion from the doctors. So he sent Arthur Rossman to staff. Bill met him as he was leaving the meeting. "Bill," said Arthur, "if I could find a bottle right now I'd drink the whole thing at one gulp."

No matter how hard he pondered the case, Bill was worried about what might happen if this man was released. The record showed that Arthur often drank paraldehyde. Besides, Bill had those eleven cases at the apartment and they took up most of his time. What was left was given to psychology studies in the morning and hospital in the afternoon. But he allowed the doctors to persuade him that Rossman would be all right outside, and the hospital superintendent sent a letter to the Rossman family in which he said that the young man had been cured of his psychosis and that Mr. William W. Wister, of New York, was going to try to help him. The letter further said that Arthur would be released in his own custody.

Bill got Arthur a job and a room. Arthur came to see Bill every day and he was easy of attitude while Bill did the worrying. He did a beautifully superficial job and Bill knew it. But he had a

tiger by the tail now and he didn't know what to do except continue to be dragged. Bill's big hope was that Arthur might become really interested in psychotherapy and that the science would hold his interest for a long while.

Then Little Arthur got job trouble. He wanted to quit. He said that the boss wanted to transfer him to nights and, besides, there was too much dust. It made him nervous. When Little Arthur left Bill phoned the boss and asked him to praise Arthur for the next week just to see what would happen. The boss didn't like the idea, but as a favor to a friend . . .

It was done. Little Arthur returned to Bill, his whole attitude changed. He said he thought it was very interesting work and he didn't want to quit. Besides, he said, he had just discovered something. The boss was a very smart man. Very, very smart. He knew how to evaluate men.

The next week the boss went back to telling Arthur exactly what he thought about him and his work so Arthur quit. He phoned the boss and called him a dope and a bastard. Bill heard about it and thought: Well, here it is. He is now ready to drink himself back to the security of the hospital, where he feels safe. The only thing I'm afraid of is that venom he's got dammed up.

Bill was worried. He phoned Arthur's brother and they had a conference. The brother turned out to be an intelligent man who had the wrong slant on Bill and thought that he had taken Arthur out of confinement on his own. Bill told him that United States hospitals do not operate on the orders of laymen.

Arthur Roszman stood in his father's downstairs hallway the following night armed with a poker. He rang the bell and waited in the shadows until his sister came down. He knew this sister and her fears well enough not to need the poker. She had a family conscience. She could have married several times and hadn't because she felt that it was her legacy to take care of her father. When she opened the downstairs door he jammed his foot in it and shoved her aside. She gasped and he smiled at her and went up the steps two at a time, waving the poker.

On the way up he paused and asked her for money. Many,

many times over the years the girl had permitted herself to be blackmailed but this time she had spine. She said no. She knew that her father was alone upstairs and she knew that a shock might kill him but she said no. Arthur went in the kitchen door and through the rooms, swinging the poker.

His sister phoned her older brother, who came as quickly as possible. Before he got there he phoned the police. Then he phoned Bill, who hurried downtown to the house. When Bill arrived two squad cars were toed in at the curb. He ran upstairs, and as he left the street he heard someone say that a cop had put in a call for an ambulance.

Little Arthur was standing on a table in the living room. Through the rooms from back to front the furniture had been wrecked. The kitchen chairs and the dishes had been smashed, the beds had been cracked, the pictures punched, and pools of glass were on the floor. Little Arthur was screaming at the top of his lungs and four big policemen were trying to move in on him at once.

They tried all the subterfuges, but he laced back and forth with his bolt of steel and kept them to the corners. Someone had carried Arthur's father to a neighbor's house. Then, on a signal, the police moved in together and dumped the table. Little Arthur went down with a crash and they piled on him. Nobody had been hurt. The doctor came in and one of the cops wiped the sweat from his forehead and explained. The doctor took six-inch strips of adhesive and wound them around Roszman's chest and arms and back until he looked like a mummy.

Then they put him on his feet and pushed him toward the door. One of the policemen stood at the exit and looked at the prisoner. Little Arthur had a faint smile on his face. He looked at the cop and he stood there a moment and then he grunted and, before any one could touch him, he had burst all the tapes and freed his arms. He got the poker and made a lunge for the policeman at the door. Three cops made flying leaps and Roszman went down in a heap. This time they sat on his chest and taped him until they ran out of tape.

Bill watched until the ambulance started off. He talked to the brother for a few minutes and went home. Two days later he had a phone call from the examining psychiatrist at a local hospital.

"Mr. Wister?"

"Yes."

"I'm Dr. Zimmerman of —— Hospital. I understand you have an interest in the case of one Arthur Rossman."

"That's true. I have."

"I'd like very much to have a talk with you about it."

"Where shall I meet you?"

"Well, I'd like to see you here at the hospital."

"All right. How about tomorrow morning at eleven?"

"Great. See you then."

Bill arrived on time and went to the administrative office. The doctor turned out to be a small man with a tiny mustache. He was very friendly and he asked Bill to sit down opposite his desk. Bill noticed that the door to the adjoining office was open and that two or three men who looked like doctors, a nurse, and two secretaries sat inside. The secretaries had pads and pencils.

"Tell me," said Dr. Zimmerman, smiling. "I understand you're a psychotherapist."

"That's right. I'm only interested in alcoholism though."

"Been in the business long?"

"Oh, a few years."

"I see. Tell me, how long have you had this Rossman case?"

"Two months."

"I understand you charge twenty dollars a visit."

"My fees vary with the patient's ability to pay." Bill began to feel suspicious.

"But you do charge money?"

"Of course I charge money. Why not?"

"Have you a doctor's degree?"

"I have not. I work *for* doctors and only take cases *from* doctors."

"I'm not interested in that, Wister. Do you know what practicing without a license means?"

"I don't know that I need a license for this work."

"That's what they all say. Wister, I think you're a quack. I'm telling you right here and now that I'm going to have you prosecuted by the district attorney's office and I'm going to have you brought before the American Medical Association."

Bill stood up and reached for his hat.

"That's your privilege, Doctor. I've never been informed that I need a license for the work I do."

He looked toward the door and noticed that everyone was listening and the two secretaries were taking notes. He knew then that Dr. Zimmerman had tried to frame him. Bill laughed.

"Is this all you want to say, Doctor?"

"That will do."

Bill left, disheartened again, and went home and phoned Dr. Quigley. Quigley tried to laugh it off but the laugh was close to strangulation.

"Don't let those fellows upset you, Bill. You're just overly concerned."

"Okay. If you're not, then it's all right with me, because I acted with a clear conscience in this case and took it only after you fellows cleared it. If I'm in trouble, then you're up to your neck too. If they investigate me you're going to be investigated too."

He felt bitter. But the thing blew over and nothing more was heard of the case.

Dr. Edmund had left a great white scar on Bill's mind. Dr. Zimmerman left another. Neither one ever healed over.

1939

BILL was beginning to reach the smaller boxes now. He found that they unlocked slowly. A fact was learned here; another there; the student added the facts and came up with a key to another box. Sometimes he ran eagerly down the wrong roads hunting, prying, learning, only to find that the truths did not add up and he must return to the last main road and start off fresh.

He finished the course in abnormal psychology and enrolled for one in child psychology. More and more the keys pointed to childhood as the beginning of all neuroses, and the alcoholic one was no exception.

When summer came he sent Billy to camp. Billy was almost thirteen now, tall and good-looking and, like many young men at adolescence, a little difficult for his mother to handle. Bill felt that a summer at a camp would probably do him a lot of good.

In July Bill moved to a duplex apartment on East Eighty-fourth Street. He spent a lot of time on Long Island. Sitting on the sands with friends, he heard a portable record player grinding out Ella Fitzgerald's "A-tisket, a-tasket, a green an' yella basket . . ." Someone mentioned having seen two old vaudevillians, Olsen and Johnson, in a Broadway play called *Hellzapoppin*. Someone else said it was a madhouse. Bill wanted to know if anyone had been out to see the World's Fair in Flushing Meadows and everyone said they planned to see it but hadn't got around to it yet.

An elderly woman said that she had read a book called *The Grapes of Wrath* and she tried to talk about it but the men swung the conversation to war, most of them agreeing that if war started Hitler would start it, but it wouldn't be in this year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Thirty-nine because the little house painter wasn't ready. War? Oh no. The men sunning themselves on the beaches of the world knew that it couldn't happen this year.

Bill drove Kay up to Connecticut for lunch. They heard the taffeta rustle of leaves and saw the shimmering heat from the tar roads and a boy with yellow hair picking blackberries and felt the sudden coolnesses when the big trees canopied the narrow roads and watched sag-mouthed farm horses look up chewing.

It was a lovely day and they felt relaxed and friendly. They talked of her job and his cases and her divorce and his career. They had a wonderful time and the word "love" was not men-

tioned. Bill went home feeling that this one had died so quietly that he hadn't missed the sound of its breathing.

### 1940

THE PSYCHIATRISTS around New York began to recognize Wister as trustworthy and sound and as a consequence Bill began to expand in psychiatric fields. He cultivated the better doctors. Some of the top neurologists and general practitioners began to send cases to him. He selected a good sanitarium in Connecticut and began to send his physically impaired cases there for treatment before starting them on courses.

He quit the research group. He worked and studied harder and ever harder. Cases came in sick and sodden and left upright, ready for admission to the world of reality. Bill knew that sooner or later he would have to get an appointment to an institution or fail as a psychotherapist. He felt that he had earned it, and, in striving for it, he was not trying to be a psychiatrist or anything beyond his ability.

He went up to the Connecticut sanitarium and sat with the doctors and talked. They were sympathetic. They were acquainted with his work. They knew what he could do about alcoholism that they couldn't. They closed the interview by shaking hands all around and telling him that they appreciated his work and would consider the idea. They permitted the idea to die, and Bill knew then that they regarded themselves as brahmins and him as a unique leper.

### 1941

THAT SUMMER about fourteen strangers, all of whom had been committed for a month or two in various institutions, came in to ask Bill if he didn't think they ought to begin curing alcoholics. He knew that they had not come to ask his honest opinion but were hoping that he would confirm something that each of them had determined to do. Bill told each one that he thought it

was a terrible mistake. He said that when he had first begun to practice therapy he had made a similar mistake.

"This illness," he said, "is a form of neurosis. Just because you are not drinking doesn't mean that you have the equipment for this work. That doesn't make good sense. It would be like saying that, just because you had your appendix removed, you now feel capable of doing appendectomies."

"If you take this step you'll be defeating yourself. Unquestionably you will jeopardize the chances of many other alcoholics to get well. One of the characteristics of the alcoholic is to take the focus off himself by assuming that he is well and trying to treat others. You must understand your own illness first; then acquire knowledge before you try to treat others."

Not one of the fourteen ever returned.

In October Bill went back to the heartbreaking job of knocking on the door of American medicine. This time he tried to get an appointment to a sanitarium in New Jersey. The doctors there said that they were well acquainted with his work and knew how fine it was. They would think this thing over and let him know. The idea died in silence.

By December Bill had decided to quit therapy. He felt that there was no point in going on with a business that fluctuated so violently that some months he made more money than he could spend and others it dropped to twenty-five dollars in thirty days. Besides, he needed a sanitarium or a hospital appointment to give him a legitimate standing. "And that," he said glumly, "is like reaching for the moon."

It was a Sunday and he was thinking these gloomy things and calling himself a medical bastard when he heard the music stop and the radio announcer cut in to say:

"The White House has just announced that Pearl Harbor has been attacked this morning by Japanese planes and is now undergoing a second attack. Manila Harbor and its installations are also reported to be under attack and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox has just arrived at the White House for

a conference with President Roosevelt. Stand by for further bulletins."

## 1942

EARLY IN JANUARY a one-time alcoholic named Thaddeus Brown phoned. Brown was a rich man with a brother who was a chronic alcoholic. He liked nothing better than a four- or five-hour chat on the subject of alcoholism. He told Bill that he wanted to open a clinic in Newark, New Jersey. It would be an experiment. He said he was willing to staff the place with two psychiatrists and two psychotherapists and that he had already asked the Rockefeller Foundation to put up a grant to start the place.

Bill's head was swimming. No, he thought. This can't be it. Not as good as *this* sounds. It's a gag. But it wasn't. Mr. Brown had contacted Dr. Lee Bergen of the Foundation and Dr. Bergen had brought the idea before the Rockefeller board and they had made a liberal grant to finance the first year.

"Now," said Thaddeus Brown, "I've been looking around for a good psychotherapist and you've been recommended to me by a number of medical men. I'd like to come over to your place and talk this whole thing over with you."

Mr. Brown was in the apartment in twenty minutes. He outlined the plans for the clinic and was sure that the Foundation would grant new sums each year. It would, in effect, go on forever. He already had a psychiatrist lined up. A Dr. Robert Reeks had agreed to work with Bill. And if Bill said yes, all Mr. Brown needed was one more psychiatrist and one more psychotherapist.

Bill began to pinch himself. He, Thaddeus Brown, Dr. Reeks, and Dr. Bergen went into a conference. Brown was sure that the Newark clinic could take the alcoholic overflow from four hospitals. When he found that it couldn't be done, and that this was no magic formula, he became sympathetic and said: "All right. Take what you can and no more." Bill said that he felt psychotherapy might be streamlined to about six months on the average. And that meant cutting it to its essentials.

The clinic opened in February. It had Brown and Reeks and Wister and a manager and two secretaries. They accepted cases from certain hospitals and the probation court. Bill got a fair salary.

Every type of case came in. Human wreckage mostly. The most heartbreaking were the women who thought that they would be given pills to administer to drunken husbands. Bill took the cases on entry and talked them over with Dr. Reeks. If the case was psychotic it was turned over to the Morris Plains Institution. If not, they went to work on it themselves.

Bill liked the place and the work. They were overworked, but he liked it. This was what he had worked and planned toward for so many years. They needed more psychiatrists and more psychotherapists to do the job right. They needed more hospitals and farms and other places for special treatment. The clinic was only the kernel. But this was it.

## 1942

LITTLE BILLY wasn't little any more. He was a big boy, even for a boy not quite sixteen. His mother felt that he needed the close contact and companionship of his father.

Bill listened to the faint feminine cries for help and went down to Philadelphia and brought Billy back with him to live. Billy said he wanted a summer job. Bill said he would try to get one for him. But there was a little trouble about working papers and then Bill got the boy a job as a page in the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Meanwhile an old Italian cook had come to live with the Wisters. His name was Franco and he wore big black sideburns and his job was to clean the apartment, order food, and cook dinner. His brand of English was difficult in the utterance and, in the listening, impossible. To make Franco understand, Bill had to learn to speak Franco's tortured grammar. The old man had a bad heart and a leg edema. His closest friend was Dickie, a rusty canary whom Bill suspected of being two years older than Franco.

Billy had been living with his father for two months when they moved to larger quarters near Sutton Place.

Summer came and everyone surly asked everyone else if they knew that there was a war on. Bill began to entertain a fear that the clinic wasn't going to last. He had nothing on which to base this fear. Without reason, he knew.

He took one or two of his old private cases to the clinic and they responded well to treatment. One day an elderly man and lady were shown in. They grasped his hand and said that their son Tim was one of his patients.

"We just came here," said the mother, while the father nodded, "to tell you that we are thankful." Bill asked them to sit for a moment. They sat, the mother opening and closing her purse with a snapping noise and the father rolling his hatbrim in his fingers. "If you had known Tim before," the mother said, "you wouldn't know him now. He's so changed. Dad here many's a time had to go out and get him and carry him home. Tim didn't shave or wash or—well, Mr. Wister, he didn't keep up appearances at all.

"But what a difference now. He's been coming to see you—five montlis is it, Dad?—five months and, oh, you'd hardly know Tim if you'd known him in the old days. He's always spic and span now and he doesn't want to drink and he has a job and—well, we just can't tell you how grateful we are."

"Did you people come all the way to Newark to tell me this?" They looked at each other.

"Yes," the woman said. The man nodded.

"Well then, let me tell you that there are few parents who have your sense of gratitude. But there is something I want you to understand about this case. Tim has made progress, yes. We can't dispute that. But in your desire to see your son get well, I don't want you to become overenthusiastic just because the boy is not drinking. Quite often patients relapse. A relapse is always a terrible letdown to the families who think the patient is cured. Right now Tim is bordering on a relapse."

The old couple looked at each other.

"He's pretty cocky about himself. He thinks he is already well. He keeps talking about his conquest of alcoholism as though it were something he had achieved. And I'm not so sure that he doesn't entertain thoughts about drinking in the future. In his case"—Bill sighed windily—"I think a relapse would be the best thing in the world."

The mother looked at the father. The father looked at the floor. There was no mistaking these glances. They were sure that they had come to canonize a saint and found themselves in the hands of the devil.

"I intend to do nothing to stop this relapse. It may come in about a week, and if it does I frankly hope that he bumps his head good and hard. You see, he's in the first stage of development right now and a relapse is going to be a very painful experience for him, both mentally and physically. He needs such an experience to wipe out his overconfidence. He will then see that he has only begun to make progress. That attitude will help him reach a more advanced stage of development."

The father looked up from the floor. His teeth were together hard. "Mr. Wister, this isn't true."

"I'm afraid it is, and I must ask you to say nothing to him or to anyone else. I want you to wait for it to happen, and then I want you to treat it as a temporary failure."

It broke Tim's parents up. But Bill had given a lot of thought to relapses and he knew why they shouldn't be dreaded and why they were a part of the true cure. It took fifteen minutes of earnest talking to convince Tim's parents. They left high of heart.

Tim got drunk nineteen days after his parents said they were grateful.

1942

IN AUGUST the clinic began a slow demise. Two of the men—one was the psychiatrist—got draft notices. They held a meeting and decided to close. Then they consulted with Dr.

Bergen, who agreed that the clinic should shut down for the duration and reopen after the war. It sounded sensible but it yanked the props from under Bill. He went down to Philadelphia and had a talk with Dr. Strecker. He told his great and good friend what had happened.

"I've decided to step out of therapy altogether," Bill said. "It's not practical for me. And I think the time to quit is now, rather than go back into private work."

Strecker knew what Bill had been through. He sympathized, but there was nothing he could do.

"I still think you ought to stay in," he said. "You've had a lot of experience. I've been thinking about this whole picture the last few months but, before talking about it, I wanted to see how Newark worked out. Let me tell you something, Bill. I've been going over our records for the past few years and I've noticed a steady rise in the number of cases coming all the way East from California to Philadelphia. Now it stands to reason that if these cases come all the way from the coast there must be a need for a good man out there. What I want to know is this: would you consider making a move of that kind? It might be just the ticket for you."

Bill weighed it on the spot. He had no money. He had no reputation on the coast. Billy had just been placed in a Catholic school. Franco was weaker. And it was a big jump to the coast.

"I don't know, Doctor," he said slowly. "I'd like to try something. I've got to try something. But it's an awfully big jump. Maybe I'd better go out there and size it up first. When you speak of the coast I assume you mean California."

"Southern."

Bill was afraid of it and yet he was impelled to go. Suppose it turned out to be the steady, dignified work he had been looking for? In any case the gamble with a sick old man and a boy would be a hard one. He counted his money and decided that he could go out there for about two weeks to size up the prospects.

Dr. Strecker gave Bill a letter to a psychiatrist near Los An-

geles. The man was John Barker, one of the best-known men west of the Mississippi. Bill had a talk with Franco before he left and told the old man to watch out for Billy and take good care of himself.

In Hollywood he took a room at the Hollywood-Knickerbocker on Ivar Street. He had the names of six psychiatrists and two general practitioners whom he wanted to interview. But first he phoned Dr. Barker and then went to see him. Barker was an aged gentleman with great knowledge and patience. The old man studied the letters of recommendation and talked to Bill.

"I'd be very happy to work along with you and co-operate with you, Mr. Wister. Of course I get very few cases of the alcoholic type. But there are plenty out here. Plenty. And whatever I can do to help, I will."

Bill felt heartened. He met the others and studied the psychiatric setup in southern California. He found it was broken into cliques. Each group seemed to be opposed to all the others. He learned that it didn't pay to tell one doctor that he had already met another. The name was usually greeted with a derisive snort. Bill had the good fortune to meet a doctor named Stefan Magdol and asked him about the chances of opening an office around Los Angeles.

"Don't spare the horses, Doc. If there is no need for me out here I want to hear it straight."

The doctor chuckled. "I can start off by saying that there is a very definite need for a fellow like you. You are here with the highest recommendations from the East." He lifted the packet of letters in his hand. "Even on the strength of these I would not have to ask further questions."

They talked awhile about schools of therapy and how Bill liked to work and what kind of an organization he wanted to work with.

"We have a hospital out here called Estremaduros. It's near Glendale. It isn't a new place but we are just beginning to expand our alcohol work and"—he smiled—"I not only think

that you would be of good service there but we would be damned lucky to get you."

Bill felt numb with joy. The doctor continued to talk, and implied that he and his group were the directing force in the psychiatric division of Estremaduros.

"Think it over," he said. "Then let me know."

Bill had arrived. He knew he had arrived and he knew that his worries were over. Here was a job at a first-class hospital being offered to him by a doctor who said, "We would be damned lucky to get you." He left the place on air, doubly pleased because he had made the grade in a state which has more quacks per square foot than a duck farm. He felt that he had been screened and found worthy.

He kept a few more appointments with general practitioners and one neurologist, met Dr. Magdol twice more, and then hurried home. When he arrived in New York Bill found that Franco was in bed with two swollen legs, Billy had thrown a little party and someone had torn the curtains down, and the canary wasn't talking.

He hurried to Philadelphia to tell Dr. Strecker what had happened. Bill said that he was so sure of himself now that he was ready to stake everything on this one great plunge. Strecker felt happy for him and wished him well. Bill borrowed money from his father to keep himself going until some income began to roll in, though Mr. Wister was gloomy about it. He didn't feel that it was just another harebrained scheme but he knew that he was nearing seventy-five and his wife wasn't far behind. He was sure that they didn't have much further to go and he said that they saw little enough of Bill but that if he went to California they'd probably never see him again.

1943

BILL DIDN'T WANT to take Franco but the old man pleaded and said that he had heard that California was much like his own sunny Italy and, if that was true, he would soon be well

again and of much service around the house. Bill said okay. They packed two canaries and their bags and left the first week of January. Bill promised little Charlie at the station that, when summer vacation time came, he too could come out and spend some time with them.

The railroad station in Los Angeles is large. Franco was ill when he got off the train but he refused help and insisted on carrying his canaries and his satchel. It took him a half hour to drag himself to the street. The problems began at the same time. Bill had to find a high school for Billy. He also had to find quarters. There were a lot of things he had never dreamed of which had to be solved quickly.

They found a big seven-room house on Camden Drive. It was a nice place, with a patio and furniture in good taste. Franco appropriated a room behind the kitchen and went to bed. Bill took one of the front rooms upstairs and Billy took the other.

Bill was anxious to get to work, but first he sent Franco to a doctor and then he put Billy in Beverly Hills High School and then he had formal notices printed telling who he was and what he planned to do in therapy and sent them to a list of doctors. Then he went to see Dr. Magdol. Bill was now ready.

"Since you've been gone," the doctor said, "there have been a few changes. The hospital, you know, is supported by the Josiah Purdy Foundation."

"The who?"

"Josiah Purdy. I'm not sure, but I understand he was a forty-niner who failed to pan gold but made millions charging miners a hundred dollars apiece for a broiled steak. At any rate the foundation has just put a new psychiatrist in charge of the hospital. His name is Mason Sheffield and I wish you would write to him and make an appointment. I've already seen him about you."

"All right, Doc. See if I have this thing right. Dr. Mason Sheffield. Is he in the book?"

"Sure. Santa Monica."

"I'll write him today."

"Then see me."

"Thanks."

Bill wrote a modest letter to Dr. Sheffield, explaining who he was and what work he had done in New York and that he had just transferred his work to California. He said he'd like to have an appointment to discuss it. He mentioned that he was known to Dr. Magdol.

The answer was prompt.

DEAR MR. WISTER:

*I have your letter of the twelfth at hand and I am laboring under a very busy schedule. In the afternoons I am at one of my three institutions. Friday I shall be out of town. I could fit you into my schedule for a brief discussion Thursday morning at nine forty-five at my office.*

*Incidentally, your relative position in the field of medicine is a mystery to me. On the surface I would be inclined to wonder whether or not you are practicing medicine without a license in the state of California. However, I presume that you are well posted in that direction.*

*Sincerely,*

MASON SHEFFIELD

Bill felt that he had been punched in the face. He read it again and it made him feel dizzy and hurt. He wired a neurologist friend in Portland, Oregon.

PLEASE CHECK A DOCTOR MASON SHEFFIELD LOS ANGELES  
STOP IS HE PSYCHIATRIST OR POLITICIAN QUERY IMPORTANT  
BILL WISTER

The next morning Bill got a night letter.

YOUR SUSPICIONS WELL FOUNDED

HERB

It frightened Bill. He began to worry again. He couldn't afford to fail this time. He had Franco and Billy and a few dollars and no job. He had tried hard time and again to find a place at

the foot of the American medical stairs and each time someone who didn't want to understand had kicked him into the gutter. He couldn't take that again.

The receptionist at Dr. Sheffield's office took him inside. Bill took one look at the handsome face, the pure white wavy hair and the byronic collar, and he knew without a word that all was lost. I've been a personality boy all my life, he thought, and you can't fool me when I come face to face with one. In a flash, staring at this doctor, he knew a lot of things. Bill could see him patting old lady neurotics on the shoulder and saying: "Now, now, Mother. Don't you worry," and telling a nurse in a side breath to double up on the sedatives. This man, he knew, showed a terrific social front, was very cordial and very sympathetic, and was callous all the way to his heart. He was the kind of psychiatrist who gets a hundred and fifty dollars a week from a patient who sees him only when the doctor comes dashing into the room followed by a white trail of admiring subordinates, grunts at the chart, beams at the patient, and chirps: "When we send you home the folks won't know you"—tragically true—and then dashes away with his long, unbuttoned white coat flapping in the breeze.

Dr. Sheffield half rose, smiling expansively.

"Sit down. Sit down, Mr. Wister. Tell me about yourself."

Bill told it softly and directly. Every time he mentioned an Eastern psychiatrist Dr. Sheffield said: "Who's that? What's his name?" implying that he had never heard of him. In each case Bill patiently mentioned the name again and tried to tell something about the man's work. Sheffield then pretended to think hard. "Oh yes. Yes. I think I've heard of that name. It came up at one of our meetings. Yes." Bill felt that Sheffield was trying to throw his backers into the basket. When Bill finished, Sheffield leaned back in his chair, gazed at the ceiling, and touched his finger tips together.

"You know, Wister, I think you've made a great mistake coming to California." He shrugged. "Northern California? Fine. Fine. There you have a different situation. Psychiatrists are—

well, much more liberal-minded. But southern California? No. That would be a terrible mistake. Perhaps even now, after some thought, you would consider the San Francisco area."

Bill chuckled. It came up gravelly.

"Look, Doctor. I'm in southern California. I'm here. I have no plans except southern California and I'm going to work here. I also have in mind—and I discussed this with your Dr. Magdol—working into your Estremaduros Hospital in the alcoholic section."

Sheffield permitted himself the smile of complete forgiveness.

"That, of course, would be quite impossible. You're a layman, Wister. You're not a doctor. At our meeting recently I established a ruling that we would accept no laymen in a medical capacity in any part of our new alcoholic section. Why, you have no idea of the work there is to do in our psychiatric section. The first thing I have to do is to clean out a lot of riffraff. It will take about six months until that place"—he snapped his fingers three times—"is clicking psychiatrically."

Bill saw that it was hopeless. The doctor had slain the presumptuous mouse. Now he wanted to toy with it. So he bandied Freud around and asked a lot of questions to try to gauge how much Bill actually knew.

"Why don't you go to San Francisco for a while? Things may change here in a year."

"Things don't change that way, Doctor. You have a fixed idea on these matters and you won't change. Therefore the situation for me will not change. Tell you what I'll do." He stood and shook hands. "I'll drop you a note in a few days and tell you what my plans are."

Bill was dazed. He walked three miles before he was sure of where he was or even why he was walking. He didn't hurt. He felt cold and his head ached and he kept telling himself that the state was full of quacks and crystal-gazers and he had come out with a small bona fide offering and it had been refused. Now he had been lumped with the quacks and that was that. And now he had Franco to take care of and Billy to check up and

a sagging bank balance to worry over. He wasn't panicky. He was just through.

He walked over to Dr. Magdol's office and told him what had happened.

"Don't you worry," the doctor said. "This thing will work out all right. We'll go to bat for you."

Bill shook his head.

"No," he said. "Wait a minute, Doctor. Let's look at this thing. I've come out here in good faith with the best endorsements a layman can get. What happened? It made Dr. Sheffield antagonistic. Now, if you help me to get the job over his head, it will be to my disadvantage anyway because I'll be swimming upstream with anchors on my arms. He'll find fault with everything I do."

"Stop worrying. It will work out."

Bill went home. He wanted to tell someone but he didn't want to upset Billy, and Franco understood nothing but pain and canaries and food. So he sat down and wrote a note to Dr. Sheffield:

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

*I'm writing to tell you that, in spite of your advice about leaving southern California, I have set up quarters here and I intend to work here. Thank you for the time you allotted to me.*

*Yours very truly,*  
WILLIAM W. WISTER

Bill was hanging onto psychotherapy by his eyeteeth. He refused to let go. He needed a young psychiatrist who had a general practice and who would use Bill as an assistant specializing in alcoholism. He wrote a friend in the East, who wrote back that he would be delighted to work with Bill but that he would need ten days to talk to his draft board about it. A week later Bill got another letter from him, saying that the Army needed psychiatrists and that he would be called at any moment.

Bill went home and sat down. His only hope now was that some cases might walk in. He sat and waited. No bell rang. He

waited some more. The bank balance was weak. Billy was having trouble with his school work. Franco was sicker and might have to go to a hospital. He sat and waited. And waited and sat.

He told Billy that they would have to move to smaller quarters. He was becoming progressively depressed. When he walked downtown he was annoyed by people who laughed. He was getting hypersensitive to noises. He had the feeling of being imprisoned in a small place with no room to move or breathe. He had to sit. He could not go out and solicit business. He began to bellow at Billy for not doing his schoolwork. He had to take care of Franco and cook the meals and put out the garbage and do the dishes and keep the place clean. The grocery was twenty minutes away and he begged Billy to please stop in on his way home from school and pick up the food, but Billy often forgot. That led to more arguments. Bill began to yell at Franco.

"Why the hell are you always worrying about the vinegar?" he screamed one day. "You ought to be damned glad we've got a lamb chop in the house! You worry about things that concern you and leave me alone."

The old man stared from his pillow at Bill. He knew that something was wrong, but he didn't know how wrong. Then Bill repented, spoke kindly to the old man and told him how sorry he was, propped extra pillows behind his head and made fresh tea for him.

Bill set May 1, 1943, as his deadline. By that day he must be on a paying basis or get out of psychotherapy forever. Southern California was full of chronic alcoholics and Bill made one last, despairing round of the doctors. They were all kind. They all promised to send cases to him. But the bell didn't ring.

Then May first came and he sat down and wrote a letter to Kay, telling her that he was beaten and was quitting the business. He found a nice house on the side of a mountain and rented it cheaply.

Billy said that he was sick of school and he wanted to get a war job. Bill said okay. It was the first even-tempered word Billy had heard from his father in weeks. In a short burst of

good humor Bill bought a female bird for Franco's two males and put the gal into the cage with the two tired, mangy-looking wolves. Franco wept with joy. Later the same day Bill told Franco curtly that he was sending him back to New York. Franco begged to stay.

"No sense you staying here," Bill said. "When this money runs out we won't eat. You're not being paid anyway. I'll buy you a railroad ticket."

Franco wept. Bill said that he could stay a few days longer. The next day Bill got a job in an aircraft factory. The man at the employment desk asked him if he could read blueprints and he said he could, so the man said, "You're an engineer," and Bill said, "No, I'm not," and the man said, "Can you read blueprints?" and Bill said yes again, and the man said, "That makes you an engineer." So Bill checked in at sixty dollars a week. The net, after deductions, was forty-eight dollars. Then he got Billy a job in a dive-bomber plant. The kid thought it was wonderful. But after a week the novelty wore off and he wanted to quit.

After work Bill dashed home fast because he had to pick up the groceries just before the store closed. He had it timed so that he barely made it. Then began the long trek up the mountainside at dusk. The canaries were filthy and the female fluttered her wings and preened herself and stood on one leg but the jaded males made no move.

Franco met Bill at the front door, hobbling, and muttering: "Strange man come . . . dunno . . . wanna shut off water."

Bill became more confused and depressed and soon he couldn't make a decision. The simplest things took eternities for him to resolve. The job was drudgery. On June first he was told to compile a new standards manual which would telescope four million parts in five plants down to about three hundred thousand parts. Bill didn't know what they were talking about.

At night he couldn't sleep and millions of thoughts raced brightly through his mind. One night he was wondering whether he should send Franco home. Then he remembered that Franco

had been sent to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. Well, what to do about Billy, then? Should he go East? No, he'd better stay. The doctors said Franco was dying. The outgo was far beyond the income. How about San Francisco? Why don't I get a letter from Kay? Has everyone forgotten me? What the hell do they mean, four million parts? Who ever heard of four million parts? What will I do with Billy? What happens when this dough runs out? Where do we go? Where do we eat? What time is it? What the hell time is it? If I get up to see, then I'll be awake all over again and I won't get to sleep. Maybe if I punch a hole in the pillow . . .

He weighed himself. Twenty-one pounds had gone. He went down to the store to buy tomato juice and came back up the mountain with orange juice without remembering how he got it or what he had asked for. He followed Billy from room to room screaming. He bought half the groceries he needed and forgot the other half. The sun hurt his eyes and the mists depressed him. He tried to write a letter home and found he had a blank sheet of paper and nothing to say. Franco came home and chose miserable lingering to the luxury of death. Bill felt as though he was about to leap out of his skin. In the last days of June he had two or three dreams about drinking, but they were fleeting and frightening. He didn't want to drink. That would be the end of everything. Drinking would bring more disaster than anything that had happened to him. He knew it and he rationalized it.

Then, as July first dawned hot and bright, he began to wonder if, perhaps, he was very, very cautious, say, and limited his drinking strictly . . . If a man had just a few, for instance, and watched himself like a hawk . . . Maybe . . .

He went downtown and bought himself two bottles of whisky and brought them home for friends, in case friends should drop in. It wasn't for him. Friends. He put the bottles in the dining-room sideboard and sat down stiffly and stared into space. Hours later he came to, sitting, staring. He went to bed. At three-thirty in the morning he fell asleep.

At four he was awake. He got up and walked barefooted into the dining room, took one of the bottles of whisky, and walked fast out into the kitchen. The top wouldn't come off quickly enough and his fingers were palsied so he smashed the neck on the porcelain drain. He took a water goblet and the bottle and went out into the moonlight and sat on the fence. He filled the goblet until it ran over and then he drank and choked and burned. In less than two minutes he felt that someone had turned the keys on his emotional violin and loosened all the strings. He sat drinking until sunup. Then Billy came out.

"What are you doing out here, Dad?"

"None of your damned business."

"Aren't you going to work?"

"No. But you are."

"What are you going to do, Dad?"

The bottle sat on top of the fence rail with the tumbler beside it. Bill knew that Billy had very slight, if any, recollections of his drinking.

"I don't know what I'm going to do. You can take the car and go to work. Call me up before you come up the hill tonight. I want you to bring up a case of beer."

Billy grinned. "You're going to cut your mouth on that bottle."

"Okay, sonny boy. From now on, you take over."

Billy left. Bill woke Franco and said that he was going downtown. He dressed and walked four miles to Beverly. He went into a musty taproom and sat down. For the next two weeks he practically lived there. He was there from early morning until late in the evening, when he staggered back up the mountain and fell into bed. In the morning he was back in the taproom. His mind kept telling him that it was just a question of time until he collapsed. For the following two weeks he was in a haze, not knowing where he had been nor caring, not knowing where he was going nor caring, not knowing when he had last been home nor caring.

Billy phoned Dr. Magdol, who came up and tried to bring

Bill out of it. He gave him medicine but Bill went right back down the mountain every morning and got drunk again. Once or twice Dr. Magdol put Bill in a hospital, but the patient always managed to get his clothes and sign himself out.

Then he reached the stage where he could hold no more liquid of any kind. He was too sick then to care whether he lived or died. This was after four weeks. A friend took him in hand and put him in the El Capitan Sanitarium. He was in bed three days, more or less comatose.

The awakening came suddenly. He felt that it was like diving out of a cloud. For days he lay there analyzing his own relapse and adding the reasons together. He thought of all the insurmountable problems he had had and how simple they seemed right now. The solution was a cinch. Go back to Philadelphia. Sublet the house, pay off what bills you can—the sanitarium bill had been paid by his mother—sell whatever assets you have, get Franco a job in California where he'll be happy for those few remaining days, and go home with Billy.

Billy stopped in to visit his father one morning.

"I'm sorry you had all this trouble," the boy said. "I guess I wasn't very helpful."

"Oh, look, Billy. This thing is really no one's fault. I know now that I've been a little off the beam for the past three months. I'm sorry for the way I spoke to you, son. It's all over now. I've spoken to your mother in Philadelphia and we've agreed that you should go back home right now."

Billy shifted from one foot to the other. Bill hadn't realized how tall the kid had grown.

"I've been thinking things over too, Dad. I'll be seventeen in September, you know, and—well, a fellow has to do things . . . I mean, there's a war on and I'd like to enlist in the Marine Corps."

Bill propped himself on one elbow and smiled. Time does such wondrous things. He recalled his own enlistment in the last war and now he was in the position of old Charles.

"I think it's a fine idea," he said softly, "and I think that your

mother may agree to it. In your case it would be a good idea. It would be a real contribution to the country too. You'll profit from it in every way. I'm proud, son."

He shook hands with Billy and sent him down to the railroad station to meet an official who would give him his ticket home.

Bill sent money to Franco and when he got out of the sanitarium he got him a job with nice people. When he was ready to leave for Philadelphia he said good-by to Franco and the old man burst into tears.

"It's been tough on all of us," Bill said. "You're going to a new place. Your job will take you up higher on the mountain. And it may do something for those sterile birds of yours. Those dickeybirds have been in the cage with that lovely young female for months. Maybe the mountain air will do them some good."

Franco stopped crying immediately. He was indignant.

"Nothing wrong with my birds," he said. "Issa female. She's a what you say, high-hat?"

In September 1943 Bill Wister was back East, beaten for the final time. He vowed that he would never practice psychotherapy again.

## 1943

BILL BEGAN to see a lot of Kay. She got a job in a Fifth Avenue shop. They saw shows together and held hands and Bill remarked that he got along better with her than with anyone else. Kay was tall and sympathetic and ambitious and had a sense of humor that was good for Bill.

In October the Axis began to wince under the beating being administered by Americans in Italy and Russians in the Ukraine and Navy landing forces skipping islands up and down and across the Pacific. Billy had finished his boot training in South Carolina. He came home on furlough and posed for a picture with a single chevron showing. Bill had no job. In the middle of the fall he was offered two. The Merchant Marine offered him a hunk of war glamor. He could have a commission and

go overseas and establish hotels for seamen. The other was in the advertising department of a New York trade paper.

In the old days there would have been no contest between those jobs. War, the thin smoke of distant battle, a uniform, a flashing smile, drinks, girls, a cap worn rakishly over one brow—that would have been it. Bill chose the advertising job. To many it would have been dull. But Bill liked the men who ran the paper. It was a sound sheet. He was forty-two and it offered him a chance for another career. He examined the paper's postwar plans and saw expansion a-coming. He knew that, for the duration, his income would probably be a modest one, but that was enough. That was security.

Bill took it, resisting the efforts of friends to woo him back to psychotherapy. He stayed with the paper. And one night in a cab he said to Kay:

"Things are going well now. I think we ought to get married. This isn't a glamorous way of saying it, Kay, but I'm no longer a glamor boy. What do you say, as soon as I get a little bit straightened out, that we get married?"

"Mr. Wister," she said, looking at him out of the tops of her eyes, "I'll think about it."

## 1945

IT WAS a black evening in February. The trolleys whined down the incline between Second Avenue and First and huddled like pale fireflies under the Forty-second Street overpass. Jack Geary stood in the doorway of the Church of the Covenant with Kay and Bill and their friends. In the East River fat freighters grunted orders to tugs to move out of the channel. The church inside was bright and the ceremony got under way quickly. Kay was a little nervous. Bill wasn't.

The minister said the words slowly and distinctly, so that everyone could hear them. On the other side of the world there was daylight on Iwo Jima and Billy Wister said words too, but they collapsed against the din of the guns. He passed ammuni-

tion and he wet his lips and the enemy O.P.s were doing a nice job, because every time Billy's Long Tom got set up the Japs began to send shells probing around the position. The marines kept listening for the loud sound of tearing silk and then they all dove into heaps of volcanic ash and came up after the burst, spitting it from between their lips. It was like that all day and all night and all the next day and the one after that.

Bill said, "I do," and after the bridal kiss there was a little dinner, a happy little dinner, and briefly he thought of Billy and wondered where he was. The papers were full of Iwo Jima, and Bill worried but he wasn't sure. He didn't have to worry about Charlie. The boy was at a boarding school in Delaware. He didn't have to worry about the folks either. His mother was happy running a woman's apparel shop in Chestnut Hill. She was seventy-four, but she had drive and personality. His father spent a lot of his time puttering around the garden or reading in the living room or filling his pipe. There was no one to worry about but Billy, and no one knew where his outfit was.

The honeymoon was spent at Bill's apartment. He knew that this marriage was going to work, because he understood now why the other one had failed. This woman was neither nurse nor servant. She was a wife—an equal partner.

One morning as they sat having coffee Bill said:

"You're a little bit leery about this marriage, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," Kay said. "I've been independent for a few years and I don't know how I'm going to react to being tied down."

"Don't worry. Everything will work out all right. You're worried about my record."

"Not at all."

"Well, if it will relieve your mind any, I've learned by all of my mistakes. And I've learned the hard way. I feel now that I know something about human nature." He chuckled. "And you're going to benefit by this knowledge."

"I've known you quite some time, Bill, and I've seen changes in these last few years. In my heart I know that we'll get along.

I know that this marriage will last. I'm happy with you. I'm damned happy." She shrugged and buttered a piece of toast and then put it back on the plate. "Don't ask me how I know, but I know that it will always be like this."

Since then the old Lukens clock has ticked several million times. The marriage has lasted through all of them.

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## AN EPILOGUE

by *William Wynne Wister*

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THE STORY of my life as herein set forth, with all the glaring details of alcoholism, was not released by me for the purpose of making sensational reading. It is difficult not to squirm under the close scrutiny of a reader upon the intimate and ordinarily secret details of one's life. Nor is my life's story released solely for the purpose of helping those afflicted with alcoholism. That is part of my goal, but my hope is far greater.

Chronic alcoholism is the symptom of an emotional disease. It is recognized as such by science, but for the many people who come in contact with it, it is surrounded by mystery and usually referred to as a "regrettable condition for which nothing can be done." Families of chronic alcoholics especially, the very ones who could use real knowledge of the disease to great advantage, are the ones who usually know least about it. Completely bewildered and feeling themselves going around in circles, they see the alcoholic through one drinking bout after another, hoping that somehow a miracle will take place which will at long last stop the recurrent attacks. Such miracles, however, do not occur. But alcoholism can be cured, and, what is much more important, it can be *prevented*.

It is to dispel some of the mystery in which people insist upon cloaking chronic alcoholism; to help create a general awareness of the hidden neurosis of which chronic alcoholism is the symp-

tom; and to show how each and every one of us can help actually to prevent alcoholism—it is in the hope of achieving this that the story of my life is written.

An alcoholic is an alcoholic before he ever takes a drink. He is a person who at a tender age has been subjected to a faulty environment far afield from the normal world of give-and-take. Because of this faulty environment (much of which is due to pampering and unwise exhibiting of the child on the part of a mother or nurse) he has drawn faulty conclusions about himself and his relation to the rest of the world. His entire subsequent behavior and all his actions are predicated upon and controlled by these early faulty interpretations.

Because of these interpretations he maintains a false estimate of himself made by his mother, and his ego rests comfortably on what his mother thinks of him. He has never *earned* his mother's adoration or measured the difference between what his mother thinks of him and his relative position in society. Because he is aware that this difference exists, however, he suffers from an inferiority complex, the size of which is in proportion to the extent of the difference itself.

The alcoholic is emotionally unable to meet life's frustrations because he was constantly shielded from them early in life. He is unable to think in terms of others and their ambitions and desires because he was always permitted to think in terms only of himself. He is unable to make sacrifices for others because he was made to feel that sacrifices were to be made only by others for him. He has never learned to earn praise and adulation through effort and achievement because he has never had to make an effort to achieve anything in order to receive praise. His capacity to co-operate with others is limited because he was never really taught to co-operate with others. He has never learned to accept responsibility because he was never given responsibility. He continues to expect as an adult, without making an effort to earn them, the abnormal amount of adulation, praise, and excessive attention which he received, without earning them, from his mother.

Completely dominated by erroneous impressions, he never adjusts to the world of reality around him but is continually trying to make the world of reality adjust to him. Because he cannot succeed in this, because he is unable to maintain his faulty interpretations of himself and the world in general, he becomes an emotional cripple, an adult with the emotional equipment of an adolescent, and consequently for him alcohol becomes a crutch.

Through alcohol he makes an escape from the reality he never learned to accept. It drugs his intelligence, allowing his emotions to run unchecked. Alcohol makes it possible for him to imagine himself to be still the person of his dreams, his mother's concept of him rather than his true self; therefore it is soothing balm to him compared to the pain of facing the world of reality for which he is emotionally unequipped. His one ambition is to drink normally, or in other words like a mature adult, but since he isn't a mature adult he can't drink like one. (An emotionally mature adult, on the other hand, will drink, but he'll never become an alcoholic. Because he is adjusted to reality he gets more pleasure out of being a part of reality and meeting its daily challenges than in escaping from it.) Though the alcoholic never succeeds in making the world of reality adjust to him, his family, in their misguided efforts to help him overcome his alcoholic weakness, often try to adjust themselves and their lives to that of the alcoholic. They do not realize in their bewilderment that this type of protective behavior on their part caused much of his maladjustment in the first place; that by continuing such behavior they are only making the alcoholic more set in his faulty conclusions and more unadjusted both to them and to the rest of the world. Sooner or later, however, they do learn that the more they try to adjust themselves to him and keep him free from responsibility and unpleasantness the more he demands to be free of responsibility and the more he resorts to alcohol.

On the other hand, it would be absolutely ruinous for a family suddenly to try to make an alcoholic shoulder responsibility equal to any normal adult's capacity. The alcoholic has the capacity of a ten-year-old, or that of the age at which his emotional growth

stopped, and his capacity must be built up gradually from this point. It is this lack of emotional growth which is the neurosis, the disease, of which alcoholism is only the symptom.

An alcoholic is like a tall building ten feet out of plumb at the top. Certain errors are made in the foundation, and as the first ten stories are completed the errors are not apparent, but with each additional story the deviation becomes greater and greater until, at the eighteenth story, it is obvious to everyone that the building is out of plumb. This is true of emotional cripples. Their illness is usually not apparent until late adolescence.

If parents could realize the importance that proper emotional training of a child plays in the prevention of alcoholism (and the lack of it in the cause of alcoholism), they would start such training in the first day of a child's life, as indeed they should.

Parents and people who are responsible for molding the lives of children must realize that by preventing children from developing into the personalities that make alcoholics they hold the key to the solution of one of our major problems today. It is the very parents who feel furthest removed from the dangers of alcoholism because their children are so young—it is these very parents who need most to know all about the causes of alcoholism and in what manner they themselves hold the power either to create or prevent it.

A child's behavior pattern is set in the first six years of his life. The entire future behavior of the child will be determined by whatever conclusions he draws from his experiences during these six years. During the years from six to twelve his early attitude grows more set each year. Mistakes in emotional training can be corrected during these years, but since the parents fail to do so in the first place, it is usually up to the schools to do as much as possible to make up for the parents' failure. From the age of twelve on, a maladjusted child will continue in ever-increasing maladjustment; the greater the maladjustment, the greater social pressures become until he reaches a breaking point in alcoholism. At this point it takes the skill of a psychiatrist to help him make a complete turn-about-face and help him start his own emotional

training, beginning at the point of blocked emotional development.

It is self-evident how much better it is for parents to do this in the first place and avoid all the misery of alcoholism.

In the very first hour of a child's life a healthy, normal relationship can be established between the child, the mother, and the rest of the family. In the very first hour of a child's life, too, he can even begin to learn to co-operate and build up a capacity to meet frustrations. You may think a child at this age is too young for anything, but it is at this point that his subconscious is fed with either the right or wrong impressions. This is very important.

Parents will find that it is often necessary to run counter to their own inclinations in helping a child toward emotional maturity, especially in the early stages of a child's life. It is not easy to keep from overcoddling a baby or overwhelming him with attention whenever he calls for it. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for the parents to think in terms of disciplining themselves as well as their child. They will probably find that it is easier to do this if they maintain an objective view of the emotional development of the child.

It is hard to list in a short space all the do's and don't's necessary in the emotional training of a child in order to eliminate the possibility of alcoholism later, but here are some of the outstanding ones:

Do not permit a child to acquire the feeling that he is the center of attraction around which the rest of the family and the world revolves. By establishing a normal relationship and proper sense of proportion right at the start *and maintaining it*, this will never occur.

Help the child to meet frustrations by not showering him with excessive attention every time he whimpers. Administer to the child's normal needs. For the rest let him adjust himself to a schedule which takes into consideration the mother's time and that of the rest of the family. By not running to his side every time he demands attention you will keep him from devising all

kinds of schemes, consciously or subconsciously, of getting your attention. You will, on the other hand, help him build up his capacity for meeting frustrations later in life.

A mother must not warp a child's emotional life by keeping the child emotionally fastened to her. A mother-child abnormal relationship is often built up not because the mother is malicious but because she is not very intelligent about her child's emotional growth. She must early in the child's life fan his interest out from the mother to the father and the other children in the family. Later she must turn a child's emotional concentration on her away from her and toward society in general. This necessitates normal emotional balance on the part of the mother. The mother must not overconcentrate her emotions on one child but must divide her emotions between all her children and the father as well, and possibly even have some outside avocational interest. Unless she does this the child on whom she overconcentrates will be elevated to a position of importance which he has made no effort to earn. This child, then, acquires a fictitious feeling of importance based on the mother's concept of what he is rather than on what he has earned the right to be. This will allow him to consider his wishes all-important, and the more his wishes are granted the more a mother dependency follows. The child's relationship to others then becomes warped, and he establishes a faulty interpretation of himself and the world. He becomes predominantly self-centered, egotistical, and self-interested, and though he may appear interested in others on the surface, he is fundamentally interested only in himself.

Do not lead a child into exhibitionism by being overly proud of him. And do not praise him too much or for every act. This leads a child to expect adulation and praise without making a constructive effort to earn it, and his every act will be based on one idea: to impress others. Too much praise will make a child lose sight of the bigger joy, that of earning the right to praise, and it will give the child the idea that he can do no wrong. Parents should be sure the praise they mete out is in proportion to the amount earned.

Do not give a child *every* advantage, or sacrifice everything so that the child can have the "best," without having him make a single effort to earn it. This is disastrous. It is also a very human error. If a child is permitted to grow up on that philosophy he will expect every advantage all through his life and will never make an effort on his part to get it. You will be building up tremendous possibilities for frustrations and at the same time making his capacity to meet frustrations nil. Parents cannot buy love and respect by continuous giving. All they get is a one-sided relationship, a child who is constantly expecting and demanding, and contributing nothing.

A child should even be made to earn his mother's love by good behavior. A child needs love and affection. Therefore the mother has a golden opportunity to win the child over to co-operation. He must learn, for instance, that for the pleasure of playing with his toys he must pick them up afterward.

A child must be taught that he cannot always have his own way; that sometimes his wishes must be denied in order that the wishes of some other member of the family may be granted. This gives him experience in give-and-take, which is excellent for emotional growth. He should also be taught to perform actions that are useful to others. This will give him an awareness of other people and their thoughts and desires, and will give him a sense of proportion. He should be taught not to offend others. And if he is permitted to suffer a little himself, he will be more understanding of the feelings and sufferings of others. All this will keep him from overconcentrating on himself and will help him to see the world sometimes through the eyes of others.

No matter how wealthy a family is, a child should be given some chore to do in the household in order to acquire a sense of responsibility. It will also teach him the pleasure that comes from achieving something. And by exerting his own efforts to accomplish something he will develop the patience that comes from success slowly reached through sustained effort.

In general, to help prevent alcoholism, parents must accept as part of their responsibility the need to create a child world that

resembles as closely as possible the adult world. They must allow their child to experience frustrations, to earn his own security, to master problems and difficulties, to gain self-confidence, self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, and to respect the rights of others, so that he will be able to bridge unfalteringly the gap between adolescence and manhood, arriving at the far side emotionally sound.

I once heard one supposedly very intelligent mother of a three-year-old say she would begin her youngster's training at the age of six; that at three he was too young to know the difference between right and wrong. She would never have admitted that she was putting off his training because she was too indolent to make the effort.

Another, whose boy of four had already acquired extremely objectionable habits, said that when he got to be seven she would appeal to his reason and this would make him change his behavior. Now, at the age of six, the child is already in the hands of a psychiatrist, the mother being absolutely unable to cope with him.

These mothers may not know it, but they are deliberately creating personalities that may well become chronic alcoholics, and all because they do not wish or do not know how to make the physical, mental, and emotional effort to train their children properly.

Now then, if because of faulty emotional training your child has already grown into a maladjusted adult and becomes a chronic alcoholic, he can be cured through this same process of emotional training which should have been started in the first hour of his life. In the case of a maladjusted adult, however, it will be much more difficult.

An alcoholic must be changed from the core out. He cannot change overnight. He cannot change his behavior and actions unless he changes his primary faulty interpretations about himself and the world. For this it is absolutely necessary to have the help of a psychiatrist, an accredited psychologist, or a psychotherapist.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>These three are not to be confused in any way with a psychoanalyst, whom I most emphatically *do not* recommend.

An alcoholic's maladjustment is like an enlarged thyroid, and just as in the case of an enlarged thyroid it is necessary for a highly skilled surgeon to remove the tissue around the thyroid, in the case of an alcoholic it is necessary for a highly skilled psychiatrist to remove the maladjusted behavior tissue which has accumulated around the kernel of the man's real self. This takes time and it takes guidance.

After many years of study on the subject and much experience in practice as a psychotherapist in alcoholism,<sup>2</sup> I know of no sound and positive cure for alcoholism except through the scientific approach of psychotherapy. Families are not equipped to cure maladjusted individuals, since they failed to prevent the maladjustment in the first place. It is essential to the welfare of the individual that families realize this.

Your son (or daughter) is emotionally ill; the emotional illness is a neurosis that manifests itself in alcoholism. The alcoholism is so much in evidence, and the behavior that accompanies alcoholism so spectacular, that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that there is anything more to the problem than the abnormal drinking itself. But nothing could be further from the truth. It is your job to remember that alcoholism is like the sneeze that comes from a cold or the cough that comes from bronchitis. It is a symptom. And just as you would call in a doctor for a physical illness, it is necessary for you to call in the help of a doctor who specializes in the cure of emotional illnesses—in this case a psychiatrist.<sup>3</sup>

Explain to your son that he should take advantage of this man's training and experience. Explain to him that this man will help him. However, do not try to force the issue immediately. It may

<sup>2</sup>ED. NOTE: William W. Wister is an accredited psychotherapist in alcoholism, endorsed by the two leading authorities on the cure of alcoholism in the country today: Dr. Edward A. Strecker, professor of psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania; psychiatrist to the Pennsylvania Hospital and consultant and chief of service, Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Francis T. Chambers, Jr., associate in therapy, Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia.

<sup>3</sup>Hereafter the use of the name "psychiatrist" includes in its meaning an accredited psychologist and a psychotherapist endorsed by a psychiatrist.

take your son a little while to become used to the idea of doing something constructive. And you must realize that a psychiatrist can do nothing for an alcoholic unless the alcoholic wants to be helped.

In the meantime the temptation to try to help your son by giving him money that he wants, giving him any part of the things he demands but doesn't earn, just as you used to do when he was a child, will be great. It will seem that just this one more thing may turn the trick and he will stop drinking. But it won't. It will only put off the inevitable—the moment when you *must* get help.

And do not make the common mistake of thinking that all your son needs is to get married. This is never the solution. Your son is not yet able to assume his own single responsibilities, much less the double responsibilities that come with marriage—the give-and-take which he should have learned as a child. No alcoholic should marry until he solves his own maladjustment.

On the other hand, if your son is already married, do not encourage him to instigate a divorce, even if both you and he feel that this may be what he needs. For as an alcoholic he is not thinking intelligently, and what he least wants now may be what he wants most after he is well.

If the alcoholic wants to be cured, however, a good psychiatrist will be able to diagnose and treat his emotional illness. The work of the psychiatrist might be compared with that of the surgeon who, finding his patient is running a high fever because of an inflamed appendix, skillfully removes the appendix instead of applying ice bags on the patient's head to reduce the fever.

The psychiatrist will help the alcoholic understand how through his early faulty conclusions all this maladjustment came about, and by the same token he will help him understand himself as he really is. This is vital. It is often a shock. Unless he understands himself as he really is and as he should be, he cannot go ahead and do something constructive. After achieving a proper sense of proportion about himself and his relationship to the rest of the world, it is necessary for him to put his new-found ideas

into practice. It is not enough for an alcoholic to see intellectually what he must do. That is only the first stage. He must feel the frustrations and experience the reaction of achievement, feel the thrill of overcoming difficulties and problems. It's like learning to swim. An individual may know the strokes but it's the practice that really counts.

An alcoholic must be made to see that the routine of living can and must be important to him, so that he will feel the sense of accomplishment merely by following a routine. He must be encouraged and inspired to meet problems. An alcoholic must be taught to think logically, which is the first step in the right direction. He must put aside desire for admiration and attention and take the slow, hard route toward earned success.

It is necessary for a psychiatrist to go all the way back to the first five years of an alcoholic's life to discover flaws and erroneous interpretations. Once discovered, these must be corrected or else the alcoholic neurosis is not cleared up.

Any treatment, therefore, that falls short of discovering and correcting the original error is no treatment at all, for it can produce only a temporary surface change in behavior. Curing a maladjustment is like transforming the badlands into fertile, productive fields. All the weeds, rocks, roots must be eliminated; the soil must be tilled and fertilized. Then the seeds must be planted and growth encouraged through proper sunlight and water. It takes time. Physical growth takes time; mental growth takes time. Emotional growth is no exception.

Let us suppose that you have suggested to your son that he see a psychiatrist but he has refused. He says he doesn't need a psychiatrist. He says you have no right to call in a psychiatrist. He says you are being disloyal to him by even so much as recommending a psychiatrist. He infers that you don't really love him or you wouldn't take this stand. Or, worse yet, he tells you so. You then decide to wait a little longer.

If the alcoholic then goes on drinking over a period of time long enough for you to see that he has no intention of seeking help—possibly for six months—you must then have the courage

and foresight to take the situation into your own hands. Your son is too ill to think for himself, however logical he may sound. He is too confused to know what is right for himself. He is, in essence, completely dependent on your judgment, your courage, your determination that he shall get well. You must send him to a sanitarium or an institution, by means of a legal commitment if necessary. You must be very firm about this, without criticism, and you must carry through with it.

In many of you there may be strong resistance to the idea of sending your son to a place of this kind. If so, it is only because of your lack of understanding. For only in a place where there are people trained in the proper care of alcoholism can your son be taken care of as he should be. Only there can he be protected from himself.

If the institution is the type it should be, it will not coddle or pamper your son. At first it will probably be a very distasteful experience for him. He will plead to get out. He may criticize you unmercifully for forcing him into it—but only temporarily. When he eventually recovers he will come to understand what you have done for him. And in the meantime he will be started up the road to recovery.

The degree to which your son is helped in an institution will depend on his willingness to be helped and on the capabilities of the psychiatric staff. But at the very least the experience will do some good. It will be a shock, and eventually it will point out to the alcoholic the futility of his drinking. And if he learns that every time he starts drinking he must again go through the unpleasant experience of being placed in an institution, he will soon be in a state of mind to benefit by the help of a psychiatrist either inside or outside an institution.

A man who has stopped drinking but is not cured of his neurosis will find another unsound means of inflating his ego. He stops drinking, and for this gets a measure of admiration for his surface improvement, and then in order to gain prominence quickly he capitalizes on the fact that he stopped drinking and sets himself up as an authority on the subject. He talks incessantly

about his alcoholism. It is his only interest. He is an uncured alcoholic who wants to start curing others. Since he is still a victim of his neurosis he sees a chance for quick prominence and sets out to exploit it. Science alone holds the key to the permanent cure of alcoholism, and this is one field the unscientific, untrained novice should stay away from. Unless an ex-alcoholic is thoroughly trained and endorsed by a sound psychiatrist he should not set out to cure others, for the very success in the cure of each case of alcoholism depends solely on the scientific understanding of the psychotherapist and his sensitive skill and technique in applying his knowledge to the case itself.

On the other hand, even while a patient is being cured of both his neurosis and the alcoholism, and for that matter even after he is well advanced with the cure, a relapse is reasonable, but it will be only temporary. It may come early in the treatment, when the individual thinks he is prematurely cured and drops all effort and work. He gets into a position where he kids himself into believing that he can drink normally. But he soon discovers his error and goes on with the treatment. He has learned from this experience what every ex-alcoholic must accept: once the nervous system of an alcoholic is injured by alcoholism his resistance to alcohol is permanently destroyed. Therefore it is useless for him to try to become a normal drinker, even though the emotional maladjustment is eventually corrected.

A relapse may come very much later, and this is reasonable when you think of the capacity to meet frustrations in terms of pounds. A child of five, protected from all frustration, has the capacity of one pound, let us say. Later in life a neurotic's capacity is much smaller than a normal person's, ten pounds as against another's forty pounds, let us say. If with his ten-pound capacity he is suddenly overwhelmed by a forty-pound pressure, he turns to alcohol. In his cure this capacity is markedly increased. But if later on he is overwhelmed by an amount much greater than he has capacity for—brought on perhaps by what he feels are insurmountable difficulties which produce extreme degrees of anxiety, worry, and a feeling of being caught in a trap with no

way out—a relapse may occur as a result of mental and emotional confusion. But when he snaps out of the relapse and finally overcomes the causes that brought on the relapse, his frustration capacity has been much increased and he has achieved even greater emotional growth. He will then be able to meet much greater frustrations in the future without relapse. Emotional growth is permanent. You can't ungrow a person emotionally any more than you can physically.

When thinking in terms of a permanent cure for an alcoholic it must be remembered that there are no short cuts by which this can be reached. The illness was twenty or thirty years in the making, and it is not going to be magically spirited away overnight. It will take time, but it will come about if you have and maintain the two essentials to sure cure: a highly co-operative patient who wants to be cured and a good, practical psychiatrist who wants to cure him.

One can easily tell the cured alcoholic. He is like any other normal being. Occupationally he is holding his own in the competitive world, having earned self-confidence through useful achievements. No longer does he find it necessary to brag about his former alcoholism or his overcoming of the problem, since he has advanced to more mature accomplishments. Socially he has won many friends, and his contacts are wide and fruitful in view of his newly developed sensitivity to the feelings of others. His love life is full and complete, his marriage a partnership of equality. His adjustment to life in reality is so satisfactory that no desire to escape exists. Therefore the need for alcohol is completely eliminated.

With psychiatry still comparatively young, many people are suspicious—even fearful—of psychiatrists. Almost everyone today admits to the tremendous strides made in psychiatry, but the question so often raised is: "How do I know a good psychiatrist from a bad one?"

The answer is simple. Just as any sound psychology has common meaning and can be understood easily, so can a good psychiatrist. His words will be clear, understandable, and logical. He

will talk good common sense and will not try to impress you with a lot of highly theoretical ideas or big words.

Everything a good psychiatrist says will be in line with the moral and social codes you already know to be right. He will help to preserve the home and the family. He will help your son to adjust to the ways of his community. You will understand what he is saying and what he is doing. If this does not prove to be true, you have had the misfortune to run into the wrong man. Go to another psychiatrist.<sup>4</sup>

The alcoholic who has finally come to his senses and wants to do something about himself is in a very much more fortunate position today than he might have been some fifteen years ago. The psychiatrist has learned much about chronic alcoholism in these comparatively few years.

The next ten years will see a different attitude on the part of the public toward chronic alcoholism. Like tuberculosis and cancer, it will be publicized widely, and, through education, the public will gain an understanding that will aid greatly in the prevention of alcoholism and will increase substantially the number of alcoholics cured. When society understands, it will not be possible for the family to dodge its responsibility.

It is not too much to suppose that we will have sound men of science attached to our school systems—men trained to spot the seemingly minor flaws in certain children and correct these flaws while the child is still soft and pliable. For the school is the logical place to discover and correct the family's original training error, thereby saving endless suffering for both child and family later on. But it may be that after understanding more about alcoholism and how easily it can be prevented, parents will make a very special effort to control themselves in their natural tendencies to protect a child from the hurts and disappointments in life to such

<sup>4</sup>In seeking aid of a psychiatrist it is extremely important for alcoholics and families of alcoholics to use great caution. The field is a rich one for untrained opportunists. It would be wise to make a selection only on the endorsement of such organizations as the Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Neurological Institute of New York, New York City; or New York Hospital (Psychiatric Division), New York City.

an extent that he becomes an adult emotional cripple in his inability to meet the realities of life.

Eventually progressive civic groups will enlist the services of reputable psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists to staff an institution for the treatment of chronic alcoholism in all of its mental and physical aspects. This type of institution, designed to care for the poor as well as the rich, will make it possible for every alcoholic to receive sound treatment when he is ready for it—something which is almost impossible today for the alcoholic without funds.

With this type of sound approach—co-ordinating the preventive with the curative—chronic alcoholism will be caught in a scientific vise and ultimately conquered.



## UNDERTOW

By Howard Maier

THERE WAS nothing much out of the ordinary about Russ Davis. He was unmarried, in his thirties, and had been a newspaperman before he went into the Army. Yet, somehow, he didn't seem to fit. He had no roots, nothing that could make him feel a part of what was going on. As he walked the same post day after day, he began to build up resentments, to worry about the past—his girl, his family, the senselessness of what the Army was making him do. When, in spite of his efforts, a Negro corporal was lynched in a near-by town by a mob of hate-ridden white Southerners, Russ Davis went to pieces. He was put in the hands of an army psychiatrist, and we follow him, through analysis, as he struggles to pick up the threads of his life and those factors which had formed him as a human being.

UNDERTOW is beautifully written, sensitive, and authentic; it is also an honestly felt blast at the reaction, red tape, and know-everything attitude of some of the brass hats in our Army. Above all it is a book the returning soldier will realize had to be written.

*This novel has not been serialized in any form prior to book publication.*

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## JIM BISHOP

*On the Record . . .*

"IN WRITING this book I have tried earnestly to keep myself and my opinions out of it, because I feel that the life of William Wynne Wister, as he lived it, is vital to our understanding of three million chronic alcoholics and it should not be encumbered with gratuities from the author. And so I wrote it almost reportorially, being careful to keep Bill himself in focus at all times, even to the point of pressing his parents, his two wives, and his two sons into the shadowy background.

"Bill Wister is one of the few men in this country who have been long-term victims of alcoholism and lived, not only to be cured, but to cure others and to dig deeply into the psychological causes of drinking. Of that small group, he is the only one I know who has had the moral courage to permit the story of his life to be put on paper for the ultimate profit of others."

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## The Glass Crutch

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